Dudley
CHRONICLE

Thursday, May 18, 2017 | Read by more than 62,000 people | Price when sold 70p

Go-ahead for homes at former campus after long wait

£6M ESTATE ON OLD COLLEGE SITE

By Richard Guttridge

A LONG-AWAITED £6 million housing estate on the site of a former Dudley College campus has finally got the go-ahead.

Work on 43 homes at the old Mons Hill college campus, near Wrens Nest Nature Reserve, will now gather pace after a deal was agreed following a six year wait.

Homes were first proposed for the Wrens Hill Road site back in 2011 when college bosses announced their intention to sell off its out-of-town campuses.

Delays over the demolition of the building and sale of the site meant the scheme was held up.

Housing association Midland Heart has struck a deal with developer Lovells to build the properties. The development will be a mix of one-bedroom flats and two, three and four bedroom houses.

The college moved out of the Mons Hill campus as part of the relocation to a new £12m training centre on Priory Road.

It was bulldozed in two phases and the land put up for sale. Demolition was only completed last year.

Developers have long wanted to take over the site but have only now been able to sign off on the plans.

Funding for the scheme has been provided by the Homes and Communities Agency.

Affordable

The development, worth £5.8m, is expected to be completed in spring 2018 and rental applications will be available by the end of the year.

Chris Miller, director for development at Midland Heart said: "We are delighted to be working with Lovell Partnerships on this new development in Dudley. This project will provide much-needed affordable housing for local people in an enviable location. I look forward to welcoming the new tenants to their homes following its completion next year."

Tony Evans, regional operations director at Lovell, said: "We are delighted to have been awarded this contract by Midland Heart and look forward to working together to deliver much needed high-quality homes to the Mons Hill area."

The college had used the Mons Hill buildings since 1990.

It was formerly Wrens Nest Secondary School, before its name changed to Mons Hill School in 1975. The school closed in July 1990 and the facilities became part of Dudley College. It was expanded three years later.

BOROUGH'S TOP CHIPPY IS BATTER THAN THE REST

Fry's delight – Sarah Barker, left, with Alex Souskas, Hayley Fletcher and Charlotte Adams outside The Blue Submarine chip shop

USING nothing but the best ingredients is the secret behind the success of a Dudley chippy which has been named the borough's finest.

The Blue Submarine, which is located near Russells Hall Hospital, has been one of the top takeaways in the Black Country for three decades.

In the past 30 years it has won numerous industry awards, and has been awarded a maximum of five stars by Dudley Council's environmental health department.

Now it has won Most Popular Chip Shop of the Year 2017 in Dudley in a competition run by The Chronicle's sister newspaper the Express & Star. The shop, which is a previous runner-up in a national Fish and Chip Shop of the Year contest, serves an average of 3,000 customers per week and employs 14 staff.

Boss Tony Andreas said: "I think there are several reasons for our success, and why we are still the busiest shop of its type in the Black Country.

"Firstly, because it has remained a family-run business, we have a personal investment in what we do and produce here. That changes everything. We filter our vegetable oils every day, sometimes twice a day, making our products virtually carbon-free.

"We source the best ingredients, including fish that's delivered daily from sustainable waters."

Chippies were rated by the number of tokens handed in by readers, while there was also a mystery shopper element which saw the takeaway taste tested.

The runner-up in Dudley borough was Our Plaice in Dudley Road, Halesowen with Bromley Lane Chippy in Kingswinford third.

ACCIDENT

Man dies after car overturns in crash

A MAN died following a crash in Kingswinford in which a car overturned.

The accident happened at the junction of Stallings Lane and Ham Lane just before 6.30pm on Monday.

West Midlands Ambulance Service spokesman Jamie Arrowsmith said: "On arrival, crews discovered a car that had come to rest on its roof following the incident, with the driver, a man, still inside the vehicle. It immediately became apparent that nothing could be done to save him and he was confirmed deceased."

EMERGENCY

Traffic chaos as bomb discovered

MOTORISTS faced traffic chaos on Monday as the main route into Birmingham was closed after a 250kg unexploded Second World War bomb was found.

Homes and businesses had to be evacuated as the gigantic German bomb, found on a building site, caused the A38 (M) Aston Expressway to be closed in both directions all day with the slip roads to the M6 at junction six also shut. The bomb was found at around 9.45am.

CHARITY

More volunteers are needed to help people

A BLACK Country charity that supports vulnerable adults is in need of more volunteers.

Dudley Advocacy needs support to help people with learning disabilities. Their aim is to work alongside vulnerable people and ensure that their voices are heard. Volunteer advocates support people on a one-to-one basis

A spokesperson said: "We are looking for passionate people who believe in human rights, equality and justice."

Training is provided for all volunteers. For more information call (01384) 456877 or email info@dudleyadvocacy.org

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MOVIE STARS AT MUSEUM

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Police investigate wave of vandalism

Image of a police suspect

POLICE have launched an investigation over vandals causing damage to cars and homes in an area of Stourbridge.

Car tyres have been slashed, windows smashed, paint thrown on driveways and graffiti sprayed around the neighbourhood.

The spate of vandalism has taken place at Hadcroft Grange between March 13 and May 2, causing thousands of pounds in damage.

A total of 11 incidents have been reported to West Midlands Police, after several residents were targeted – and some have now been victims of the yobs more than once. Police are combing through CCTV recordings in a bid to identify the culprits.

Officers have now released an image of a suspect and are appealing for the public's help for information.

Investigating officer Pc Natalie Lees said: "We have deployed police officers to the area. We are examining CCTV footage and using other covert tactics.

"The suspect has been captured by a CCTV camera installed at one of the properties on the street. Although the quality is poor we have released this in a bid to identify the person responsible. I would ask anyone who has any information regarding these incidents to call the police non-emergency number 101."

The vandalism has meant residents have had to pay out thousands of pounds in repair costs.

But ward councillors are confident police will catch the perpetrators.

Councillor Angus Lees, of Pedmore and Stourbridge East Ward, said: "I would imagine police will get results. Police will bring in special people for that."

Information can by passed to police on 101 quoting the crime reference number 20DY/78185X/17.

Firearms figures are 'extremely worrying'

POLICE have recorded more than 50 incidents of guns being fired in the Black Country in five years.

Firearms were discharged 57 times between 2012 and 2016, according to new West Midlands Police figures released following a Freedom Of Information (FOI) request by The Chronicle's sister newspaper the Express & Star.

The data shows officers carried out 38 arrests relating to the incidents, while people were charged on 10 occasions.

The police force said the incidents were defined as: "When there is clear evidence when a firearm has been discharged."

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson said that the police take gun crime 'very seriously'.

And council leaders have said they 'don't want to see guns on the streets'.

Sandwell Council's cabinet member for public health and protection, Councillor Preet Gill, said: "These figures are very concerning. The risk of harm is really concerning. We do not want to see guns on our streets."

Escalate

Sedgley's Councillor Bill Etheridge, UKIP defence spokesman, said there has been a rise in the number of people carrying weapons on the streets.

"When I was younger, it was unheard of to think that people would be walking around with any form of weapon and now it is common place," he said. "Now it is starting to escalate and go down a dangerous path. To have any figures regarding gun crime is extremely worrying."

The data relates to Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton. Police carried out the most arrests and charges relating to the incidents in 2014. Officers arrested people 21 times in that year and charged people six times.

Mr Jamieson said: "We take the issue of gun crime very seriously. The police are taking strong action to break-up the gangs and get guns off our streets.

"I am working with West Midlands Police and funding projects across the force area to help young people understand the dangers of gun crime."

Bishop opens his patch of Paradise

The Rt Rev Graham Usher in his garden in Cradley Heath with Anna Gillespie, of Churches Housing Association

THE Bishop of Dudley opened his garden to visitors and raised more than £1,400 for two charities.

The Rt Rev Graham Usher welcomed people into the garden at The Bishop's House, Bishop's Walk, in Cradley Heath. Visitors had the chance to explore the garden, enjoy refreshments and buy plants, vegetables and even a bug house for their own garden.

The event raised money for The Three Choirs' Festival and the Churches Housing Association of Dudley and District, which provides the Dudley women's refuge.

Bishop Graham said: "It was good to welcome people to the garden at Bishop's House and to celebrate the work of two excellent charities. The hard work of all involved, and the generosity of so many people, made a wonderful day full of a sense of community spirit.

"Thank you to all who came along or contributed to help make the day such a success."

The garden was open on Saturday.

Bishop Graham was ordained as fifth Bishop of Dudley in March 2014. He used to be chairman of the NorthEast Forestry and Woodlands Advisory Committee of the Forestry Commission.

Over the last 90 years the National Open Garden Scheme has donated £50 million to charities across the UK. To get involved or make a donation visit the website at www.ngs.org.uk

Men in court after spate of robberies in Black Country

A TOTAL of six men have appeared in court after a spate of armed shop robberies in Dudley and Sandwell.

Martin Rollason is alleged to have carried out five robberies at One Stop shops over a two-week period, armed with a knife and, on one occasion, an axe.

The 30-year-old, of Albionfield Drive, West Bromwich, is charged with five counts of robbery and seven counts of possession of an offensive weapon and was remanded in custody at Dudley Magistrates Court on Monday.

Another man, 19-year-old Aiden Jenkins, also appeared over a separate robbery on the Super Stop off licence in Priory Road, Dudley, on Friday.

Jenkins, of Field Road, Dudley, is charged with robbery and has been released on bail.

Both men are due to appear at Wolverhampton Crown Court on June 12.

Four of the men were arrested on Friday after armed police dramatically surrounded a house in Dudley for more than two hours.

Kyle Dingley, 18, of Victoria Road, Cradley Heath, and Lee Pritchard, 23, of Gloucester Road, Netherton, have each been charged with one count of robbery. Brad Arnold, 20, of Beechwood Road, Dudley, is charged with two robberies.

James Taplin, 30, from Hawthorn Road, Tipton, has been charged with seven robbery offences, seven counts of possessing an offensive weapon and one of cultivating cannabis.

Relief as spending claim is dismissed

CONSERVATIVE candidate for Dudley South Mike Wood has told of his relief after he was cleared over allegations he had breached election spending rules.

Mr Wood was one of several Tory candidates investigated over spending in the run-up to the 2015 General Election.

Mr Wood said the allegations had been 'obviously politically motivated' and that the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) had come to 'the right conclusion'.

He added: "It is a great relief that a line can be drawn under this episode."

Cannock Chase parliamentary candidate Amanda Milling was also cleared.

The CPS head of special crime, Nick Vamos, said there was insufficient evidence to prove that there had been any dishonesty.

Fiddler on the Roof show at town hall

A MUSICAL theatre company is staging its latest show in Stourbridge. Tinkers Farm Opera present Fiddler on the Roof at Stourbridge Town Hall from May 24 to 27 at 7.15pm with a Saturday matinee at 2.15pm. Call the box office on (01384) 812812.

Neighbours want hostel closed after body found

PEOPLE living close to a Brierley Hill hostel where a 17-year-old girl was found dead have called for the premises to be shut down.

Neighbours of the Highgate Road property have spoken out after the body of Megan Bills, of Stourbridge, was found in a wardrobe last week.

Unemployed Ashley Foster, aged 24, appeared before magistrates in Dudley last week. He is accused of preventing the lawful and decent burial of Miss Bills without lawful excuse between April 16 and May 4. He was remanded in custody.

The hostel, which is two houses split into four flats, provides support for people who have recently left prison or are on probation. Neighbours claimed they had not been told that the property would house ex-offenders.

Richard Young, who lives in Highgate Road with his wife and teenaged, daughter said: "It has caused a lot of problems. We have had drug paraphernalia come over into our garden."

Another neighbour, Sobia Iqbal, who is married with two young children, said: "I'm all for giving people a second chance but the fact is this place is right by a nursery, just a stone's throw away from a school and opposite a park. It makes you feel scared."

Alan Lunt, a strategic director at Dudley Council said: "This building is not operated by the council and we have no control over who is placed there by external agencies. We have no grounds to close the site down."

£280,000 to put brakes on speed

PLANS to curb speeding on some of Dudley's major routes have been approved by council bosses.

A total of £280,000 has been lined up for the improvements which will see Dudley Council install traffic calming and speeding measures on a number of roads in the borough which have become notorious for the anti-social issue.

Roads where traffic calming is proposed including Birmingham New Road on the Tipton and Dudley border, King Street in Dudley and Northway in Sedgley.

Traffic management will be put in place on accident black spot Gospel End Street, along with possible junction realignment to improve safety for any drivers using the route.

Floral fair to raise funds for church

A CHURCH is hosting a floral spring fair on Saturday to raise funds for its upkeep.

The event takes place at St Peter's in Kenb Street, Upper Gornal, between 10.30am and 2.30pm.

Campaign to save historic St John's

St John's United Reformed Church

A CAMPAIGN has been launched to save an historic church for community use after it was put up for sale.

St John's United Reformed Church in Stourbridge has gone on the market after it closed following its final service in January.

More than 100 people had already signed a petition calling for the church to be saved for community use just days after the campaign was launched.

Campaigners are hoping to raise enough money to buy the church in stop it being taken over by developers.

The church, which is next to the ring road, closed its doors following its final service in January. Its congregation had dwindled to just eight but the building was used by various community groups, including a food bank and a community radio station

A bid is now being launched to try and form an action group who can raise the funds to buy the building and prevent it from being taken over by developers.

The campaign is being spearheaded by Wordsley musician Chris Passey, who his part of community arts group Gig Caritas, which was based at the church until it closed. It is being support Dudley Council leader Stourbridge councillor Pete Lowe, whose parents and grandparents were married there.

The decision was taken to close the 150-year-old church due to its dwindling congregation and a growing list of repairs. An emotional final service, attended by more than 40 people, was held at St John's on New Year's Day.

The petition can be viewed at www.change.org/p/save-st-john-s-keep-it-in-the-community

Teenager drove wrong way on town's ring goad

A TEENAGE joy rider, who drove a stolen car in the Black Country with the police in hot pursuit, has been locked up for 10 months after being described as 'a silly boy'.

Wolverhampton Crown Court heard that police halted their pursuit when 18-year-old Mustafa Islam drove the wrong way on Stourbridge Ring Road.

He was on a joy ride in a Vauxhall Astra that had been taken from an address in Rowley Regis in a car key burglary six days earlier, the court was told.

A tyre flew off the saloon as it sped away from police the driver ignored a police request to stop when driving in Netherton during the early hours.

Mr Paul Spratt, prosecuting, said that soon afterwards another police patrol spotted the Astra on the outskirts of Lye, speeding at more than twice the 30 mph limit with showers of sparks flying from the wheel without a tyre.

During the incident at around at 4am on September 14, police pursued the car as it hurtled through a red traffic light.

But they abandoned the chase after Islam drove the stolen car the wrong way around Stourbridge Ring Road.

But the chase resumed after the vehicle was seen in nearby Greenfield Avenue but quickly ground to a halt as a second tyre went flat.

Drugs

Islam told police he knew the Astra was stolen and had been drinking and taking drugs before driving.

Mr Richard Mohabir, defending the trainee electrician, sid: "He is a silly boy who admits he only took to the road because he fancied a bit of a joy ride. When he saw the police he panicked."

Islam from Durham Road, Netherton, admitted dangerous driving and handling stolen property. He was ordered to be detained at a Young Offenders Institution for 10 months and was banned from driving for one year and five months.

Judge James Burbidge QC told him: "You had been drinking and taking cannabis before driving at up to 70 mph in a 30 limit. Mercifully nobody was coming in the opposite direction as you drove the wrong way round Stourbridge Ring Road. You could have killed yourself and your passenger while putting police officers in jeopardy, all because you fancied a joyride."

A-Ha! Stan and Ollie movie tribute

Another fine mess for John C Reilly, left, as Ollie and Alan Partridge star Steve Coogan as Stan during filming

HOLLYWOOD rolled into the Black Country with Steve Coogan and John C Reilly shooting scenes for the forthcoming movie Stan and Ollie.

The pair appeared as Laurel and Hardy in front of the cameras at the Black Country Living Museum, where they are filming a biopic about the legendary Anglo-American comedy duo.

Coogan, who is best know for his comedy character Alan Partridge, plays Lancashire-born Stan Laurel, while Oscar nominated American actor Reilly takes the role of Oliver Hardy.

One onlooker said: "It's been fascinating – it's not every day that you see Steve Coogan out and about in Dudley. It was amazing watching him and John C Reilly perform. It was a real treat."

Coogan and Reilly, both aged 51, were seen relaxing between scenes for the movie, which is directed by Jon Baird. Visitors were able to enter the Tipton Road museum during film but were unable to go in to the 1930s street.

The Laurel and Hardy biopic will document the pair's last tour, performing at variety halls in the UK. The duo from the golden age of Hollywood appeared at Dudley Hippodrome in 1947 and '52

The museum is a popular film and TV location, including for gangster drama Peaky Blinders.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Night at museum will cost half price

THE Black Country Living Museum will be open on Saturday night for its annual Red by Night event.

It is part of the European-wide annual Museums at Night festival.

The museum will bring the old Black Country back to life with lots of noise and smoke as costumed demonstrators display traditional skills at the Tipton Road attraction.

To book tickets, visit www.bclm.com or call 0121 520 8054.

Tickets are half the usual admission price, so £4.40 for a young person and carer and £8.75 for adults.

Pupils and teacher OK after accident

SIX pupils and a teacher were taken to hospital after an accident during a science lesson at a Quinton school.

An ambulance was called to Four Dwellings High School last week after the teenagers and teacher were exposed to fumes, which can cause breathing difficulties, when a student mistakenly opened a bottle of the chemical bromine water during a science lesson.

It was reported that all of them were discharged 'fit and well' after they had check ups at the Queen Elizabeth and Birmingham Children's hospitals.

Mayfly mirth and music at college

STUDENTS at Halesowen College will be raising the roof again at their annual music festival – Mayfly – tomorrow (Friday).

Second year music students will be celebrating music through the decades from the 1960s to the present day.

There will be three stages filled with music, drama, stand-up comedy and dance plus refreshments all day.

The afternoon events are for schools but the evening is open to all for £5 on the door, from 5.30pm until 10.30pm.

Paws for thought at park's fun day

A BANK holiday family fun day is being held in Buffery Park, Dudley, on May 29 from 11am, featuring the Paws in the Buffery dog show.

The Friends and Residents of Buffery Park in Dudley and K9 Search UK are organising the event.

For further details see www.k9searchuk.com/events or call 07988 433187.

Other attractions will include stalls, bouncy castles and face painting.

Vintage day out at hall

TRACTION engines and fairground organs will be on show at Himley Hall, near Dudley, on Sunday, June 4.

The grounds of the hall will be used for a free admission vintage transport and country fair running from 10am to 4pm. There will also be craft stalls plus Punch and Judy show.

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COUNTY NEWS

Burial costs second highest in country

CREMATION and burial fees are rising in the West Midlands – making it the second most expensive region to be buried in the country, according to new research.

Cremation fees have gone up an average 5.5 per cent in the region to £752, and burial fees have risen 7.8 per cent to an average £2,245. The UK average is £753 for a cremation and £1,792 for a burial.

The figures, from a study by Funeralbooker, reveal the West Midlands is the second most expensive place to be buried, with London first.

Stand-up Bill will be back in Brum

COMEDIAN and musician Bill Bailey will return to Birmingham next year.

The star is best known for his stand-up and songs, as well as his roles in Black Books and Never Mind The Buzzcocks. Bill, now aged 53, will be at the Barclaycard Arena on June 2, 2018.

Tickets for the show start from £31.84 and go on sale on Friday at 10am. They are available from the Ticket Factory on www.theticketfactory.com or by calling 0844 3388222.

For more details go to the comic's own website, www.billbailey.co.uk

Feel good film on at town hall

A SPECIAL screening of a film which tells of an unlikely friendship is taking place later this month.

The Friends of Bilston Town Hall group is showing A Street Cat Named Bob on May 22 at 1.30pm at the town hall, in Church Street, Bilston.

Doors open at 1pm and tickets cost £3.50. Tickets can be purchased in advance from the town hall reception or reserved by calling 07855 817 596.

For more information, visit www.friendsofbilstontownhall.co.uk.

Prof says asthma not taken seriously

RISKS associated with asthma need to be taken more seriously in the West Midlands, experts have warned. Health chiefs at the trust, which runs Sandwell Hospital, said asthma was a 'big issue' throughout the region.

Professor Kate Thomas, from the University of Birmingham, who was a guest at the latest Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust board meeting, said: "It's about understanding that asthma actually is a risky disease."

Children let down

SEVEN out of 10 children with serious mental health problems are being treated outside their home area, according to NHS figures.

Around 69 per cent of young patients were admitted to hospitals away from their local region in 2016/17, up from 57 per cent the year before.

Rise in breakdowns caused by potholes

POTHOLE-RELATED breakdowns surged in the first three months of 2017, new figures show.

The RAC said the condition of local roads was on a knife-edge and one season of cold and wet weather could make it worse than ever.

It dealt with more than 6,500 breakdowns between January and March likely to be attributable to poor road surfaces, an increase of 63 per cent on the same period last year. This included broken suspension springs, damaged shock absorbers and distorted wheels.

The last time the firm recorded as many pothole-related defects was in the first quarter of 2015.

It described the figures as a major concern because it expected the mild and comparatively dry winter to lead to a reduction in incidents.

RAC chief engineer David Bizley said: "Our figures sadly show a surprising and unwelcome first quarter rise in the number of breakdowns where the poor quality of the road surface was a major factor. We had expected a figure no worse than that recorded in the first quarter of 2016 (4,026) and it is very concerning that the roads, strangely, appear to have deteriorated."

A recent Alarm study by the Ashphalt Industry Alliance found that local authorities need more than £12 billion of funding to bring the road network up to scratch. The gap between the amount councils say they received in the last year and what they require to keep roads in reasonable order is almost £730 million.

Mr Bizley added: "We still have a long way to go to ensure the whole road network – not just our major roads which are enjoying one of the largest investment programmes in a generation – are really fit for purpose.

"Certainly anyone that has experienced a breakdown as a result of hitting a pothole will know just how frustrating that can be, not to say dangerous and expensive if vehicle damage is sustained.

"The backlog in preventative maintenance reported by the Alarm survey suggests we are on a knife-edge and it will only take one season of poor weather to take us back to where we were a few years ago."

The Local Government Association, which represents more than 370 councils in England and Wales, say councils fix a pothole every 19 seconds, amounting to 1.75 million per year.

Family kept dogs in 'appalling' conditions

By Richard Guttridge

A FAMILY kept dogs locked in 'squalid' pens and another in such a bad state that it had to be put down, a court heard.

The RSPCA found the pets in 'appalling' conditions when they raided the house in Sedgley.

Two German shepherds and two German shepherd husky crosses were kept outside in pens littered with faeces and, at the time of the swoop, had no access to water, Birmingham Magistrates Court heard.

A Jack Russell called Honey, who lived inside the house on Turls Street, was found to have gnawed at a tumour and had not been taken to the vet. She had to be put to sleep. Another dog, a German shepherd called Daisy, who also lived in the house, had a skin disease and ear condition.

Owners David and Diane Roberts, and Diane's daughter, Naomi Heydon, admitted nine charges each relating to causing unnecessary suffering to animals and failing to meet their needs.

Suffered

Mr Rafe Turner, prosecuting on behalf of the RSPCA, told how the dogs suffered with a range of problems.

Mr Turner said: "Six dogs were neglected in various ways. Four were kept outside in squalid conditions."

When questioned, Mrs Roberts, 52, said the dogs in the pens were mostly the responsibility of her husband as she struggled due to mobility problems and the 'decking was slippy'. Mr Roberts said he let the dogs out for 15 minutes a day and they weren't taken to the vets because it was 'too expensive'.

Heydon, 25, owner of Honey, claimed she was 'going to do something about it' but that the RSPCA came before she could.

All three defendants are to be sentenced on May 31.

Police praise for two young heroes

Wrens Nest rescuers Jack Goodman (left) and Louis Price receive their awards from Chief Constable Dave Thompson

TWO teenage boys have received a police award after helping officers to track down a missing girl in Dudley.

Jack Goodman and Louis Price led officers to the vulnerable 15-year-old in woodland at Wrens Nest Nature Reserve.

The pair, who were both aged 13 at the time, called police to raise concerns after spotting the girl on September 26 last year. Officers were on their way to the nature reserve as part of the missing person investigation when the call came in and the boys offered to meet them at the entrance.

Jack and Louis helped guide the officers across wet scrubland and in fading light to the distressed teenager, who was found at one of the highest points of the nature reserve and was in need of medical treatment.

The Dudley teenagers have been recognised for the mature way they handled the situation, their understanding and compassion by each receiving the Chief Constable's Young Persons Award.

Chief Superintendent Richard Fisher said: "Without the help of Jack and Louis it would have taken considerable and specialist resources to find this vulnerable girl. Their actions went above and beyond just reporting an incident."

Saved venue is warned not to rival the Grand

CAMPAIGNERS behind the multi-million pound restoration of Dudley Hippodrome have been told to prove it will not rival Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre before receiving crucial funding.

The group leading the project has applied to the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for more than £100,000 to carry out a feasibility study. However, the LEP could decide not to award funds if it feels it could harm another venue.

The venue's rescue group, who have renamed it the Black Country Hippodrome, have hired solicitors to make their case and say they are confident they will get the funding.

Initial work at the historic Castle Hill venue will focus on removing asbestos.

Evidence

The group will need to provide evidence the 1,700-seater Hippodrome will not take custom from the Grand Theatre in the city's Lichfield Street, which prides himself as the theatre for the Black Country.

The aim is for shows to run at the Hippodrome for the first time in half a century when it opens its doors again, and it will also be a conference venue.

Steve Daniels, of the Black Country Hippodrome, said: "We are confident we won't be in competition. What we will be doing will be totally different."

He added there was another potential avenue for funding if the LEP did not provide the cash.

Dragon boat race returns to Himley

THE 17th annual Chinese dragon boat racing competition, organised by Wolverhampton Rotary Club, takes place on the Great Pool at Himley Hall this weekend.

Over the years £340,000 has been raised for charities, mainly within the local area with hundreds of people usually turning out to watch.

This year's team event on Sunday runs from 10am-4.30pm with people urged to turn out and cheer on the teams.

Earlier this month there was an RNLI Six Hour Lifeboat Race. And it follows the British Mini Day held recently.

For further information on the Dragon Boat Race contact Mike Boyce on 07976 612276. It is free admission and car parking.

Finger lickin' food and jobs boost too

A NEW KFC restaurant has opened it doors in Stourbridge.

The fast-food chicken chain has built a restaurant off the town centre ring road, creating around 50 jobs.

The branch, off Mill Race Lane, has a drive-thru for customers.

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Victim was driven at, say police at inquest

A MAN who died after an apparent hit and run incident in Halesowen had been 'driven at' on more than one occasion the night he died, police told an inquest.

Benjamin Morse was hit by a dark coloured hatchback car in Cherry Street, Halesowen. The 36-year-old had been dropped off with a group of friends after a night out, when a 'verbal altercation' took place between them and a driver of another car.

Black Country Coroners Court heard they were then 'driven at' before Mr Morse, from Yewtree Road, Halesowen, was knocked over, the inquest was told last week. The incident happened on May 1 at around 12.15am. Mr Morse was pronounced dead a short time afterwards.

Detective Inspector Justin Spanner, said: "Mr Morse had been out drinking with three friends at a local pub when they got a taxi back together. They were involved in a verbal altercation with another vehicle. They had been driven at on more than one occasion and then Mr Morse was knocked over and the car drove off."

A 21-year-old man was arrested on suspicion of murder and later released on police bail. Two men, aged 32 and 19, were arrested on suspicion of assisting an offender and have also been released on police bail.

The cause of death was given as head injuries.

Senior Coroner Zafar Siddique adjourned the hearing for six weeks pending the outcome of criminal investigations.

Boy arrested after pupil is wounded

A TEENAGER has been arrested after a suspected stabbing outside a school in the Black Country.

A 14-year-old pupil suffered an injury to his leg near Perryfields High School in Oldbury. A boy, also 14, was detained by school staff and arrested on suspicion of wounding.

Police were called to the school on Oldacre Road, Brandhall, around 3pm on Thursday.

A statement from the school said: "The school remains a safe and friendly place."

Police spokesman Gina Lycett said: "A 14-year-old was treated for a minor injury to his leg and a 14-year-old boy was arrested on suspicion of wounding. He was released from custody pending investigation."

Ruby will shine in own spotlight

HANDSWORTH-RAISED soul, gospel and reggae singer Ruby Turner will take a break from her gigs with Jools Holland for a concert in her own right at Cannock's Prince of Wales Theatre on May 28, tickets £20.

Council criticised over fake speed camera

DUDLEY Council has admitted that a 'speed camera' it installed on one of the Black Country's busiest roads is a fake.

The region's police chief David Jamieson has accused the authority of deceiving the public after bosses installed what he said was nothing more than 'a metal box'.

The camera was set up in March on a notorious stretch of the Birmingham New Road, near the junction of Woodcroft Avenue on the Dudley-Sandwell border.

Council chief executive Sarah Norman admitted the camera was 'not operational' and said 'any deception' was intended to deter drivers intent on breaking the speed limit.

A Freedom of Information request revealed correspondence on the issue between Mrs Norman and West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner Mr Jamieson.

Embarrassing

Describing the situation as 'an embarrassing episode', Mr Jamieson wrote: "I am deeply concerned that the safety camera that your council has installed on Birmingham New Road is in fact a fake and is not intended to be operational. It really should not be described as a safety camera. It is a metal box.

"By installing a camera that isn't functioning, a deception has been placed on the public and confidence in road safety measures has been undermined."

Mr Jamieson went on to demand that the council 'urgently clarify the situation with the public'. In response Mrs Norman wrote: "We have relocated an existing camera housing to a site on the Birmingham New Road to help address a long-standing problem with speeding in that vicinity.

"This is not the first time Dudley have relocated an obsolete camera and is therefore not an isolated initiative."

She continued: "It goes without saying we are not keen to promote the fact that all static safety camera housings in the borough are non-operational as they would cease to be a deterrent."

UKIP warned over hold on the balance of power

THE leader of Dudley Council has increased pressure on UKIP councillors amid talks to decide who runs the authority.

The controlling Labour group could face a battle to remain in power after UKIP said it was unlikely to support them.

Labour does not have an overall majority in Dudley, leaving the possibility of a deal between Conservatives and UKIP to change the leadership.

But Labour's Pete Lowe, who is facing the prospect of losing his position of leader of the council, said for that to happen UKIP would have to put aside its claim of being an independent party.

Councillor Lowe said: "What will be interesting is UKIP claim to be independent, but they would have to decide to prop up a minority Conservative administration – that is what they would actively vote for."

The uncertainty over who will lead for 2017/18 comes after UKIP group leader Councillor Paul Brothwood said he could no longer support Labour, hinting at a deal with the Tories.

The three parties have been at loggerheads over a series of issues, including plans to axe the borough's leisure centres and increase council tax.

U-turn

Labour was forced to make a U-turn on both issues, following opposition at the council house.

Councillor Brothwood has suggested that Tory boss Patrick Harley could be put forward as new leader at the authority during the annual general meeting today (Thursday).

The move would need to be backed by almost all Conservative and UKIP councillors in a formal vote in order to be passed.

The UKIP chief said talks were still ongoing but that it was 'highly unlikely' the group would side with Labour.

He added: "If we voted to put the Tories in power we would still keep our independence, we would stay as an opposition and not accept any cabinet positions."

Councillor Lowe said: "The AGM will decide both the mayor and leader of the council. All I can do is put my position forward and see where that takes us.

"I will continue doing what I have been doing, working in the best interests of Dudley."

Watchdog praises care home

Staff and residents at Island Court Care Home celebrate the 'good' rating with a cup of tea

A CARE home in Dudley has been rated 'good' across all five categories of inspection by a health watchdog.

Island Court Care Home, in Woodsetton, Dudley, was given the rating by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Representatives from CQC made an unannounced visit to the home in February, and the report has rated the home 'good' for being safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led. The home provides residential and nursing care for up to 55 older people, some of whom are living with dementia.

The home was commended for its good operational structure, with residents, relatives and staff able to give their views.

The report stated: "People were treated with dignity and respect by staff who they described as kind and caring.

"People benefitted from being supported by a stable staff group, many of whom had worked at the home for a number of years.

"People were complimentary about the service and the registered manager. Staff felt supported and listened to."

Susan Geary-Campbell, home manager, said: "This rating is definitely a team effort, and we are very proud."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Sweet Merry Hill move for desserts

A BLACK Country business is looking for the sweet taste of success after choosing Merry Hill for its lastest branch, creating 20 jobs.

The Little Dessert Shop, launched in 2015 in Wolverhampton, offers desserts, sundaes, crepes, cakes and waffles including more than 40 flavours of ice cream and sorbets. The store, which is the seventh franchise in the region, will be located at the Intu centre's food court – Eat Central – when it opens this month.

It was also announced that Hobbycraft will open at the lower retail park.

Green belt homes set to be refused

PLANS to build nine homes on green belt land look set to be thrown out by council bosses – less than a year after they were previously rejected.

Heyford Homes have resubmitted an application to build the properties on land sitting off the A451 Norton Road in Stourbridge.

The plans will go before Dudley Council's Development Control Committee on May 23.

A report to councillors says: "There are no very special circumstances in this case to outweigh the harm that would be caused to the green belt."

Head shave cash is cut three ways

A WOMAN from Dudley has raised £2,440 by shaving her head in aid of charities.

Dawn Hawthorne, of the Priory Estate, shaved her head to raise money for the Mary Stevens Hospice, the Georgina Unit at Russells Hall Hospital and White House Cancer Support in Dudley.

The sponsored head shave took place in The Three Crowns Taphouse in Dudley last month.

Music pub's Katiesfest helps animal charities

A POPULAR Stourbridge music venue is holding a three-day festival to raise funds for animal charities.

Katiesfest at Katie Fitzgeralds in Enville Street, from May 26 to 28, will feature Fire That Divide, Effigy for Sleep and Bigger Than Seattle. The festival will be held on the Friday evening from 8pm and from 2pm on the Saturday and Sunday.

Charities being supported are Sea Shepherd Conservation, Rover Rescue and Hillfield Animal Sanctuary.

Law firm's golf day

A STOURBRIDGE law firm is organising a charity golf tournament to raise funds for the Midlands Air Ambulance. The Wall James Chappell event is taking place at Blackwell Golf Club, Bromsgrove, on June 29. Teams of four compete in a Stableford competition over 18 holes.

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IN MY VIEW
with Mark Andrews

Shocking reminder of online reliance

THE cyber attack on the NHS is a timely reminder of how we have all become far too dependent on the internet.

Nobody would deny that the internet is a useful tool, and has made massive strides in increasing efficiency over the past couple of decades. I'm sure that within the NHS it has improved services, saved a lot of money, and possibly saved lives. But that comes with a caveat. Computers are invariably fallible, and susceptible to attack. It is why I have never been tempted by internet banking, despite the lure of better interest rates.

The internet is a useful tool which can make services more efficient. But it must never become something which we stake our lives on. And imagine the carnage if it was the driverless car industry that had been the target of the hackers instead.

■ ■ ■

THE General Election has reignited the old debate about whether our railways are better run as a private enterprise or as a state-owned service. I suspect a great deal of nostalgia for the golden days of British Rail comes from young people with no memories of the wheezing old locos pulling filthy carriages and staff with all the joie de vivre of a wet weekend in Margate. But what really puzzles me is how people get so worked up about this when our railways are, to all intents and purposes, nationalised already.

The routes are owned by the Government, and managed by the state-owned Network Rail. The franchises are awarded by the Department for Transport. And many of the services are provided by state-owned operators – such as Deutsche Bahn, which does a very passable impression of the old British Rail with its Arriva Wales service in this neck of the woods. Not to mention the notorious Southern Rail franchise in London and the south-east, part owned by the French state operator SNCF. So our rail network is state-owned, the franchises are determined by the Government, and often awards them to state-owned companies.

■ ■ ■

ANYWAY, I think whether the railways are privately or publicly owned is a bit of a red herring. The real issue is whether they should be run on a commercial basis, as they are at the moment, or whether they should be subsidised by the public purse.

At a superficial level, more investment in our rail network, particularly if it keeps fares down, sounds very attractive.

Except, of course, that in the Black Country, we don't really have a rail network, Beeching saw to that in the 1960s.

I would love to think that "more investment" in our railways meant things like the reopening of the old Walsall-Dudley-Stourbridge line and everybody having easy access to a station. But the cynic in me thinks it will mean White Van Man subsidising well-heeled commuters in London and the other big cities.

It's all bugging us with royals, politicians and the EU

Medical expert Dame Sally Davies, warning us all on too much use of antibiotics

Prince Philip, a role model for people moaning about extending the retirement age limit

Monty Python's Holy Grail – your father smelt of elderberries, on a T-shirt near you now!

Sally's warning on antibiotics' overuse

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

AFTER the recent puzzle about why submariners wear camouflage combat kit, a reader asks, why do counters at some polling stations wear hi-viz yellow jackets? Maybe it's to protect them from floating voters.

"WE will probably be all right but our grandchildren won't, if we don't take action." Chief Medical Officer Dame Sally Davies this week on the rise of superbugs caused by over-use of antibiotics.

DAME Sally is even suggesting that, as antibiotics become useless, the latest strain of so-called 'super gonorrhea' might be treated by the mediaeval practice of putting mercury in the bladder. We may live to see the reappearance of that grim ditty from 300 years ago: "A night with Venus, a lifetime with mercury."

WHY is it I cannot look at the word 'supergonorrhea' without a mental image of Dick van Dyke as Bert the chimney sweep in Mary Poppins? Um-dittle-ittl-um-dittle-I

"I BELIEVE there is a lot to learn from reading Kapital." Those are the 11 words that could spell the end of shadow chancellor John McDonnell's political career. His support for Karl Marx's handbook on communism is more than his shadow-cabinet comrades can stomach. A revolt to unseat him is said to be under way. But why? If you don't believe there is a lot to learn from Das Kapital, how can you call yourself a socialist? And are socialists no longer welcome in the Labour Party?

A READER writes: "Historians have revealed that they may have found the location in Suffolk where St Edmund is buried. It is thought to be in the town of Bury St Edmunds. How much do these people earn?"

IF you believe everything you read the much-hyped King Charles III (BBC2) will cause the Royal Family 'deliberate pain' by raking up an old myth about the fatherhood of a certain prince. Frankly, the Windsors come from such a long, convoluted, dubious and disputed series of bloodlines that I doubt if anyone at the Palace gives two hoots.

IS the Duke of Edinburgh a role model for young people? Absolutely. The way the state pension is going, they're all going to have to work until they're 96.

THE then-and-now photos of droughts have been entertaining the Great British Public for many years, but what do they actually tell us? See, here is an image of a pretty bridge across a river. When we had lots of rain, the river was full. Now we have no rain, the river is not so full. Coming soon: somewhat drier fields. The drought news – brought to you by the Department of the Bleedin' Obvious.

THERE was a wonderful moment in The Durrells (ITV) when the awkward teenager Leslie (Callum Woodhouse) first encountered the achingly tempting Corfiot beauty Vasilia (Errika Bigiou). In that split-second of desire, the viewfinder flap on his ancient camera suddenly sprang open. It was a cheeky metaphor; the late Brian Rix would have loved it. There is no denying that the gorgeous, pouting Vasilia is exactly the sort of older woman that could pop a young lad's Brownie.

A FORMER comrade of the hate preacher Anjem Choudary is reported to have returned from Syria to the UK where he is working as a pizza delivery rider. Hell, this is serious. In the great scheme of things, I bet far more lardy-arse Britons are killed every year by take-away pizza than by terrorism. Double-thick, special greasy 12-incher with extra spicy sausage for the infidel at No 33.

THE men and women calculating a harsh Brexit deal in Brussels are not our friends. They may not even be particularly nice people, especially now that their beloved European Project is losing its second-biggest player. It is hard for us Eurosceptic Brits to comprehend the religious-like fervour the EU inspires in some circles. In one of those asides which really is worth investigating further, Ian Hislop remarked on Have I Got News for You (BBC1) that Jean-Claude Juncker is "a difficult piece of work . . . he's not a great guy." Certainly, the language being used by Juncker and his fellow EU negotiators is not so much the language of friends but of jailers and it stirs a deep race-memory of snarling across the Channel. I noticed this week that you can buy T-shirts on eBay with the wonderful insults between French and English knights in Monty Python and the Holy Grail: "Your mother was a hamster and your father smelt of elderberries." Unless calmer heads prevail, by the time Brexit is over we'll all be wearing them.

AND off, for reasons I won't bore you with, to the baby-equipment superstore. Here is living proof that if you delay having babies until you can afford them, you will never breed. One pram cost a cool £940. Our first pram was a Silver Cross, as used by the Royal Family, and it cost us a tenner, second-hand. I dare say these days we'd be arrested for child neglect.

LEAFING through the hobby mags I found one feature by an enthusiastic hack who had tested and reviewed 17 different sorts of paintbrushes. Ah, the untold glamour of journalism.

TALKING POINT

A dog's life should not be fashion accessory

WHY do they do it? Recipe for cruelty. Take one cute dog, shave off a lot of its fur, sprinkle with stupid brightly-coloured bows and watch it be ridiculed.

We are supposed to be a nation of dog lovers yet some people just treat them as toys to be dressed up and shown off.

Surely all a dog wants is to be cared for, fed, given affection and taken out for regular walks. Not fluffing up and dressing up to appear in a competition.

Do the dog show officials actually judge if the dog is happy about what is inflicted on it?

Yes, it is probably well-trained and I am sure the owners who attend the show have taught their dog to be on best behaviour for the judges. But are they classed as pets or just something to show off in the hope of taking home a prize?

Man's best friend? I don't think so.

Would you actually want your best friend to be treated that way?

I have seen cute dogs – naturally cute – adorned with various outfits, red bows on their heads, fancy dress costumes, especially at Christmas, and worse. A lot of the time you would not treat a child that way.

People often criticise beauty pageants as being sexist or showy but this is no better. In fact it is much worse.

Waiting to be judged the poor dogs sit round for hours, often in hot and probably cramped conditions with no idea of what awaits them.

Do owners actually think their dogs enjoy the experience?

And what about the stars with their handbag dogs. These 'pets' do actually have legs and would probably enjoy the exercise. They should not just be used as a fashion accessory.

You won't find any dogs who actually 'check themselves out' in a mirror. They would rather be chewing on a bone!

And what did I see on television the other day – an advert which positively encourages dog owners to dress them up.

A busker out with his dog is basically being ignored but put the dog in some ridiculous outfit and suddenly the busker's bucket starts to fill up at a rapid pace.

So that cruel gimmick is being touted as a way to make extra money. These 'pets' are not circus animals there to entertain. There is criticism about performing animals which is often labelled as cruel. Is this not just as bad?

Often when I drive home from work I see a man out playing with his dog, throwing the ball for his dog to chase. What a lovely scene and no doubt a very happy pet. That is loving your dog.

As they always say a dog is not for Christmas it is for life so give it a decent life and treat it – like a dog.

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NHS has been pushed to breaking point

WITH the General Election looming, politicians from all parties must not duck the crisis in our NHS or allow it to be pushed to the margins by the focus on Brexit.

In the West Midlands, hospitals, general practice and social care have been pushed to breaking point as years of underinvestment has left NHS staff and services worryingly overstretched.

Indeed, a recent British Medical Association (BMA) survey revealed that doctors are becoming increasingly concerned over funding cuts and the impact on patient care, with more than half of doctors surveyed reporting that quality of care had become worse in the last year with only three per cent believing it had improved.

With the NHS facing a £30bn deficit by 2020 the situation needs urgent attention as worsening NHS performance figures, increased waiting times for treatment and bed shortages are having a direct impact on patient care and safety. Despite one of the best health care systems in the world, years of underinvestment in the face of rising patient demand means the NHS is now failing too many patients, too often.

Whoever leads the next Government must ensure that NHS funding keeps pace with other European nations, that EU doctors in the UK and UK doctors in the EU are protected from the impact of Brexit, that general practice is properly supported, that policies protect and enhance the public's health, and that the pressures impacting the day-to-day delivery of high-quality, safe care are tackled.

DR STEPHEN MILLAR
BMA West Midlands
regional council chair

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST
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Whatever happened to manners?

NOBODY has manners anymore. The world's gone mad, teachers can't tell the children off these days as they might get stabbed, or worse.

We were always told in school to behave or we would have a piece of chalk thrown at us, or the cane across our hands, or sent to the headmaster. You were scared to death, and when you got home your dad would clip you round the ears as well.

With all these do-gooders the world's gone mad. I was going through the door at our dentist and children barged through without saying anything, don't they teach manners in school these days?

Every morning in our school we would have half-an-hour going through some manners before we carried on with lessons.

Nobody picks up litter when it gets dropped the whole borough looks a mess with all the rubbish about.

MRS A WILSON
Brierley Hill

Calm talks rather than threats please

BRITAIN has been a member of the European Union for 43 years.

We have been good members, paying all of our contributions (not like some of the members).

The people of Britain decided democratically at a referendum to exit the EU, namely Brexit. So why are we getting all of this aggro and threats from other member countries, especially from Juncker and his band? Britain has done more than any other European parliament.

All that Britain wants is to leave the EU. We will still be trading with the EU and they need us more than we need them.

So come on EU leaders, let's have a calm negotiation on leaving the EU and forget all this aggro.

BOB WHITEHOUSE
Kingswinford

Thank you for your kindness

LAST Friday I was driving my wife to a medical appointment in Wolverhampton and had a puncture.

Fortunately we were just outside the Londis service station in Warstones Road, so I pulled on to their forecourt.

Changing a wheel was beyond my physical capability, so I asked a man on the car wash for assistance.

With no hesitation he directed me to a quiet corner and proceeded to change the wheel with dexterity and skill using the jack and tools from my car. So very little time was lost and we were only 10 minutes late for our appointment.

On completion, he refused to take any payment whatsoever. Such acts of kindness get very little publicity and so, although I do not know his name, I would like to publicly thank him for his very kind act.

Thank you sir, you are a true gentleman.

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Kingswinford TG

CHAIRMAN Enid Fennel welcomed a visitor to the May meeting at the community centre and hoped she would enjoy the meeting.

After the formal business of reading and signing the previous meeting's minutes, Mrs Fennel, in the absence of the club's delegate, read the report of The Federation AGM.

The group leaders announced their forthcoming events. Enid then asked members to peruse their copies of Townswoman magazine, in order to discuss them at the June meeting before enjoying strawberries and cream.

Margaret Whitfield was thanked for bringing roses from her garden to brighten the room.

The quiz team made arrangements for pick-up times to the football club venue and Enid wished them good luck on behalf of the members.

She then introduced Ron Gallivan who gave a thought provoking talk entitled Iron Maidens, a fascinating account of how well planned the conscription of women was conducted during the Second World War and how the results were very successful. They had long lasting effects too, in the fact that it now became more acceptable for married women to go out to work and it also brought pressure on the case for women to receive equal pay for equal work. He was thanked Chris Moy.

Raffle prizes were won by Ann Rogers and Sylvia Taylor.

Body matters form the subject of talk

Stourbridge Ladies Society

STOURBRIDGE Ladies Society held their first meeting in the Amblecote Room at Stourbridge Town Hall, following its move from St Thomas's Church Hall.

The Speaker at the meeting was Ms Pat Green and the subject 'Body Matters'.

The audience was told of the need to look after themselves no matter whatever their age. Some things, such as inherited genes, cannot be changed. If there is a known tendency towards ill health, being forewarned means something can be done to improve a person's health. What we can do is to take care of ourselves.

A good diet was encouraged, allowing for clearer skin, better weight control and preventing or controlling diseases such as Type 2 diabetes. Exercise is essential to maintain muscle tone. It keeps the body physically young, helps joint disease, burns calories and increases the metabolic rate.

The meeting then finished with a raffle and a cup of tea.

Anyone is welcome to meetings for interesting talks and friendship. The next one is on Tuesday, May 30 and will feature a quiz and poetry readings. For more information call 01384 28841.

Fitting way to take regular exercise

Dudley Senior Ramblers

ACCORDING to the television and the Press, we all spend far too much time sitting in front of the television or computers. This could lead to an increased risk of heart problems due to the lack of exercise, it is said.

It is also said that this lack of exercise can increase the risk of diabetes and could possibly be a cause of many brain disorders. This is especially important for older people but reducing the chances of these problems occurring can easily be achieved by taking gentle and regular exercise by walking.

The Dudley Senior Ramblers was formed way back in 1990 specifically for the older generation, enabling them, in the company of like-minded people, to enjoy regular exercise out in the fresh air, and helping them to stay as fit and as healthy as possible.

Newcomers will be guaranteed a warm welcome by a happy and friendly group of men and women.

Meetings take place on alternate Wednesdays at 10.45am for a programme of varied walks of approximately five-to-six miles.

A certain amount of fitness is necessary to be able to cope with undulating terrain and climbing stiles but help is always available when climbing these. To join, you must be over 50 and able to make your own way to and from the start points for the walks which are no more than 20 miles distant from the centre of Dudley. Strong shoes are a must and a waterproof is handy (just in case), a picnic lunch and you're ready to go.

If anyone is interested, see the poster in the Dudley Library or online at 'The Dudley Community Directory'.

Join club for knit and natter

Wollaston Knitters

WOLLASTON Knitters meet on the first and third Tuesday of each month at 6.45pm in St James's Church Hall, Wollaston, Stourbridge.

Members knit and natter, and newcomers are always most welcome.

At the moment, the ladies are knitting twiddle muffs and trauma teddies for charity, along with their own usual items. For further information contact Brenda on 07474 719730.

A small charge of £2 is made to cover the room hire.

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Cock-a-doodle don't make so much noise

THIS crowing cockerel has become public enemy number one in a Black Country street – and landed its owner in hot water with a council.

Great-grandfather Steve Jones has been threatened with a fine of up to £5,000 if he does not take action over his booming bird, which fed-up neighbours say is driving them mad.

Dudley Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Team has written to Mr Jones warning him he must put a stop to the racket after receiving several complaints.

Residents in Marley Road, Kingswinford, have reached their wit's end and say the bird has been crowing all hours of the day. However, Mr Jones, aged 61, disputes claims his pet is making too much noise.

Bobby

The cockerel, named Bobby Moore by the West Ham supporter, is kept in a coop in the garden, along with six hens. The council has launched an investigation and said it will visit the street to monitor noise levels.

A letter sent under the heading 'anti-social behaviour' stated the owners of cockerels must ensure they do not cause a nuisance to other residents and advised him to consider keeping it indoors at night.

Mr Jones said: "He makes a muffled noise but you can't really hear it. He isn't any trouble. I could understand if he was doing it 24/7, then I would do something about it. You don't hear him in the night. I put a blanket over him because when they see the light in the morning that's when they start crowing. I spoke to one neighbour who said it gets on his nerves now and again but it's a natural thing for a cockerel to crow."

The letter from the council states: "If we are satisfied that the noise constitutes a statutory nuisance under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, an abatement notice will be served requiring you to stop the disturbance, and if this is not complied with, you could face a maximum fine of £5,000."

Mr Jones said he would fight any action against him, adding: "I haven't done anything wrong."

Alan Lunt, strategic director of place at the authority, said: "While we understand people may choose to keep animals within their home and garden, we do ask people to consider the impact on their neighbours. In this case, we have issued guidance on keeping cockerels and reducing noise levels. We will be monitoring the situation closely."

Steve Jones, of Kingswinford, with his cockerel, Bobby Moore

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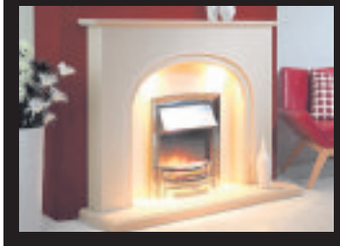

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Guided walks at Himley Hall

PEOPLE can take in the stunning landscape and architecture of Himley Hall and Park with a number of free guided walks this spring and summer.

The walks have been organised by Dudley Council to give participants the chance to learn about the park's fascinating history whilst taking in its natural beauty.

On Sunday, May 27, and again on Sunday, August 6, there will be a tour around the grounds starting at 10am.

There will also be a guided walk exploring the Himley Estate's history at 10.30am on Saturday, June 17. Participants will have the opportunity to visit the Earl of Dudley's Memory Garden too.

The tours include uneven ground and suitable footwear is required.

It is free to participate in the tours but people do need to book by calling (01384) 817817.

Ex-soldier is locked up for stealing cars worth £96k

A FORMER soldier 'obsessed' with cars, who took 10 vehicles with a total value of almost £100,000 in three months, has been locked up for nine years.

Adam Bodycote twice drove off with people hanging from the vehicles and almost knocked down the owner of a third as he targeted those selling cars on the internet.

Wolverhampton Crown Court heard that the 28-year-old swerved from side to side at up to 35mph while trying to shake off Mr Amjad Ali, the owner of a £6,000 BMW, until he was thrown onto a grass bank near his Oldbury home on January 22.

A police constable jumped from a stolen Ford Focus to 'avoid serious injury' as Bodycote reversed at speed with the officer clinging to a door frame of the car in Church Lane, West Bromwich, on February 13, said Mr David Swinnerton, prosecuting.

The owner of a £7,000 BMW was almost knocked down by his own car after being pushed away while getting into the passenger seat after Bodycote said he wanted a test drive in the vehicle. The door narrowly missed the victim as the car roared off.

Bodycote posed as a would-be buyer after the cars were advertised online on either the Gumtree or eBay websites. Seven were stolen and three seized in robberies at addresses in Smethwick, Oldbury and Cradley Heath between December 5 and February 13. Their total value was £96,755.

Miss Sally Cairns, defending, said father-of-three Bodycote had been 'obsessed' with cars since childhood. His life had gone downhill due to drugs.

Bodycote, of Beech Road, Wednesbury, pleaded guilty to fraud, theft, robbery, handling stolen property and driving while disqualified.

Adam Bodycote - jailed

£41m university extension ready

THE finishing touches have been put to a £41 million university building which is set to open next year in Edgbaston.

Staff and students from Birmingham City University gathered at the new Health Sciences and Education building for the 'topping out' ceremony last week, which saw the addition of the building's highest point.

The 10,500 sq m extension on Westbourne Road, Edgbaston, forms part of the University's City South Campus.

The new development, set to open in 2018, will result in the relocation of the University's School of Education, consolidating the Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences onto one site.

It will offer teacher training and specialist facilities for health sciences including provision for research, a new lecture theatre, a multi-purpose hall, speech therapy, physiotherapy and ultrasound suites, art and technology classrooms and IT hubs.

It's no joke, Jonny now has his own ale

Comedian Jonny Cole toasts the success of the new brew

BLACK Country ale drinkers will be able to raise a glass to comedian Jonny Cole who is having his own brand of beer launched.

The Stourbridge-based Sadler's Brewery has joined forces with Cole to brew up the new ale called Fat Face.

The first pints will be pulled at the official launch at the Sadler's Brewhouse and Bar venue in Lye on Wednesday, May 24, when Jonny will perform his act including some new material.

Fat Face is one of the most popular songs from the repertoire of the comedian who has developed a huge following with his performances around the Black Country.

Mr Cole said: "I played at the brewery a few months ago and it went down a storm. We were having a drink afterwards when it was suggested they could name a beer after me. I said 'call me tomorrow when you are sober.' They did and we said 'let's go for it.'

"They wanted the beer to be like me, Black Country born and brewed – and a little bit cheeky."

Reminder to register for vote in election

POLL cards should have arrived by now at all homes across Dudley borough ahead of next month's General Election.

People will be going to the polls on June 8. Dudley Council is currently delivering cards informing residents of polling station locations. All homes should have had them by May 14.

Sarah Norman, chief executive and elections returning officer, said: "I would urge people to make sure they are registered to vote if they want to have their say in the General Election next month."

The registration date is Monday (May 22), residents can register online at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote or contact the local electoral registration office on (01384) 814740, which you can also call if you have not received your poll card. People can apply to vote by post (by May 23)or can appoint a proxy to vote on their behalf (by May 31). For more information on voting visit www.dudley.gov.uk

Black Country a 'world beater', says Brexit boss

A CONSERVATIVE Government will get 'the right deal' with Europe to grow the Black Country's 'world beating' manufacturing industry after we leave the European Union, says the Brexit Secretary.

David Davis made the comments as he visited Thomas Dudley Ltd last week with Conservative Dudley North candidate Les Jones, as the Tories ramped up its campaigning in the target constituency.

The minister and candidate Mr Jones, a Pedmore and Stourbridge East councillor, toured the foundry on Birmingham New Road and met with some of the firm's 400 workers. They also spoke about Brexit with joint managing director Jason Parker.

Mr Davis said: "Brexit in a way is the foundation of what happens next. If we get, as we intend to, a successful Brexit with a continued good relationship with the European Union and continued access to markets – not membership – which is frictionless with no tariffs and no restrictions, that will underpin the whole economic effort."

He added: "This part of England is the engine of the United Kingdom, it always has been. For virtually most of the industrial revolution it has been the productive part and the machine room of the Empire. And today it is the same. What we are aiming to do is to encourage that, to allow it to develop and be a world beater like it has been for a century."

Dudley North has been a Labour seat since its creation in 1997 but this time around is a top Conservative target. Ian Austin is looking to retain the seat for Labour and Bill Etheridge is contesting it for UKIP.

David Davies, right, with Tory candidate Les Jones, centre, and Thomas Dudley's Jason Parker

112mph driver is jailed for 15 months

A DRIVER who reached speeds of up to 112mph in a bid to escape police has been jailed for 15 months. Luke Zarelli was at the wheel of a hired Mercedes C250 when he refused a police request to stop in Buffery Road, Dudley, on October 22.

Wolverhampton Crown Court heard that the 23-year-old from Bull Lane, Wombourne, led officers on an eight-minute chase during which he ignored a red light and hurtled through junctions. Mr Simon Burch, prosecuting, said that on Duncan Edwards Way the Mercedes was clocked at speeds up to 112 mph.

Zarelli – the subject of a suspended jail sentence for cultivating cannabis – finally stopped and was arrested. A small amount of cannabis was found in the vehicle.

Mr Richard Davenport, defending, said: "He panicked when the police asked him to stop. He knew he was on a suspended sentence and realised he had cannabis in the car." Zarelli admitted dangerous driving and breaching his suspended sentence.

Judge Amjad Nawaz told him: "The fact that there was no accident was more by chance than design."

Five times more ops cancelled at hospital

MORE than 140 patients faced cancelled operations at Russells Hall Hospital due to bed shortages last year – five times more than the year before, new figures reveal.

A total of 149 people had their scheduled procedures cancelled at the Dudley hospital last year. This increased from 29 in 2015.

It comes after hospital bosses revealed bed blocking had reached an 'all-time high' in March, due to delays in the transfer of patients.

By Lucy Thompson

Dudley Group NHS Trust, which manages the hospital, revealed the latest figures after being asked in a Freedom of Information (FOI) request 'how many operations have been cancelled due to bed shortages over the past three years'.

The hospital replied with the figures, which also showed 81 operations were cancelled in 2014, but would not comment because of election time purdah.

Number

December 2016 saw the biggest number of cancelled operations in one month from the past three years, totalling 47.

Out of the 149 cancelled operations last year, the hospital said 104 of the patients were operated on within 28 days of their procedure being called off, 33 were operated on after 28 days and 12 were not operated on.

In 2015, 23 patients out of the 29 were operated on within 28 days, five were operated on after 28 days and one did not have the operation.

In 2014, 59 of the 81 were operated on within 28 days, 18 had their operation after 28 days and four were not operated on.

Patients operated on 28 days or more from their original scheduled operation included some who had chosen to wait longer.

Some had chosen not to undergo procedures, while in other cases operations were no longer required, the trust said.

Dudley UKIP councillor Paul Brothwood said: "The NHS is really feeling the brunt of the cuts. I don't want to see any figures like that. Unless massive investment is made, we should expect to see more cancellations.

"The key thing is where the money is spent – more needs to be invested in front line services in hospitals to avoid the cancellations."

At the end of January the trust said 682 out of 723 beds at the hospital were full, more than the 85 per cent, which NHS safety guidelines state should be the maximum.

Trafficking and child abduction charges

A BLACK Country man is among 29 people who will go on trial in relation to the sexual exploitation of children.

Twenty six men and two women face a total of 170 charges as part of a major police investigation.

They include Saqib Raheel, aged 30, of Stourbridge Road, Dudley, who is charged with trafficking and child abduction.

The majority of the accused are from Huddersfield in West Yorkshire.

The defendants appeared at Leeds Crown Court where they were jeered by protesters outside the court building amid a large police presence.

The crimes are alleged to have taken place between 2004 and 2011, and relate to 18 women, who were children at the time. The youngest child involved was 11 years old.

Judge Peter Collier QC ruled that the cases will be heard in three separate trials starting in January.

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Generous donation boosts church appeal

EFFORTS to restore a tower clock and organ at a church have been given an unexpected boost thanks to a £2,000 donation from a generous pensioner who read about the church's plight in The Chronicle.

Campaigners at St Peter's Church, in Cradley, was staggered when the woman handed over a bundle of notes after reading about the church's plight in the The Chronicle.

The cash will go towards repairs to the huge clock and organ, which will be new additions having been salvaged from St Luke's Church in Reddal Hill, Stourbridge, following its demolition.

The woman who made the large donation lives locally and wishes to remain anonymous.

Reverend Katryn Leclezio said: "I was absolutely astounded at the thick bundle of notes which was handed over to me.

"I had expected £50 or so, but wasn't expecting this gift, which is a quarter of what we are trying to raise.

"She has lived a long time in the community and just wanted to help.

"She is not a rich person but has been careful with her money all her life. To be handed over that amount of money was quite something."

Church leaders are hoping to hang the historic clock from the building as St Peter's has never had an exterior clock before.

The church has been without an organ since 2011, with its blower and fan in need of repair. The congregation has had to make do with a keyboard.

The clock needs some repair work to its glass, and as well as being lifted into place, the church hopes it can be linked with the current ring of eight bells so that it chimes at the correct times, and that it will be illuminated at night.

Rev Leclezio is continuing to appeal for donations to aid the restoration bid. She said: "I would like to appeal to people of the area who have enjoyed the services of St Peter's Compton Organ in the past to donate to this cause so that the organ can be restored to use for future generations."

"The number of weddings at St Peter's is slowly increasing and we have a significant number of funerals. The organ adds so much to these important moments in peoples' lives."

Donations to can be made at www.crowdfunder.co.uk/compton-organ-refurbishment

Rev Katryn Leclezio, right, holds the clock with Christine Adshead, Paul Millward and Simon Davies

Fast-growing firms see West Midlands challenging London

MORE than two dozen firms from across the Black Country and Staffordshire are among the fastest-growing and most dynamic small and medium-sized companies the UK has to offer, a report reveals.

They feature in the latest list of 1,000 Companies to Inspire Britain – a selection of the brightest and the best put together by the London Stock Exchange Group. The West Midlands has performed particularly well, with 80 of the listed companies based in the region.

Xavier Rolet, chief executive of the London Stock Exchange Group, said: "It is too early to see how challenging Brexit will be in the long run but so far the small and medium sized businesses that drive much of our economy have shown resilience. The UK – especially the West Midlands – has a real opportunity to build a new, sustainable, productive and job-creating post-Brexit economic model if it backs these dynamic entrepreneurs and businesses.

"The West Midlands region, already renowned as a pre-eminent manufacturing and engineering hub which, more recently, has begun to challenge London's dominance in the services industry, also confirmed its reputation as the most entrepreneurial UK area outside London – with nearly 17,500 new companies created."

In Dudley the list spotlights Bolt & Nut, Select Health Care, A&H Construction and Development and In Touch Games. It also identifies car parts firm Cabauto in Tipton, Harper Group Construction in Rowley Regis, Crown House Technologies with its manufacturing centre in Oldbury and NDC Polipak in Cradley Heath.

Heritage is lined up for global recognition

THE Black Country bid to become a 'global geopark' has been bolstered by a positive recommendation from world heritage organisation UNESCO.

At the start of 2016, the four Black Country councils – Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton – submitted an application to become part of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's global geopark network.

By David Cosgrove

A geopark is described as 'an area of international significance that protects and promotes the geological and related industrial and cultural heritage for everyone to enjoy now and in the future'.

The geopark would link different heritage sites and features across the area to tell the story of the landscape.

In the case of the Black Country, the significant part it played in the Industrial Revolution is at the heart of the bid, alongside the minerals and other natural advantages that meant it could happen.

Visit

Following a visit by UNESCO delegates in the summer of last year and a presentation to international delegates at a conference, the Black Country has been recognised as globally important and having the necessary the attributes to become a global geopark.

The UNESCO Global Geoparks Committee has made a number of positive recommendations in order to further strengthen the Black Country's application and is giving organisers additional time to implement their recommendations before it goes back to the panel.

Within the next two years, the team has been asked to provide further assurances about the sustainability of a Black Country global geopark and to increase awareness and visibility of the sites that form part of it. The team has also been encouraged to work more effectively as a single territory in order to manage the whole Black Country for future generations.

Sarah Norman, chief executive at Dudley Council, said: "One of the most important things we can take from this process so far is that we are recognised as a world class heritage destination.UNESCO has recognised the Black Country is globally important in terms of geology, culture and local history and has commended the 'exceptional work' of all partners."

To find out more visit blackcountrygeopark.org.uk

Grease is the word

ROCK 'n' roll musical Grease will be coming to the stage in Birmingham.

The ever-popular musical will be performed at the Birmingham Hippodrome with Tom Parker, from boyband The Wanted, as Danny and Over The Rainbow winner Danielle Hope as Sandy. It runs from May 29 until June 3. For details see birminghamhippodrome.com website.

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Rare old motorbikes are stolen

FOUR 'irreplaceable' vintage motorcycles, thought to be worth a combined £20,000, were stolen as thieves raided a Black Country business.

The vintage bikes, which included a model thought to be the only of its kind, were taken from Villiers Services in Quarry Bank, which restores motorcycle engines and provides parts.

Steve Gollings, owner of the company, said he was 'gutted' to lose the bikes which were part of his personal collection.

The prized bikes included a BSA A10 Road Rocket, a Greeves 380 Griffon scrambler and a 250 Sports Twin. But most cherished of all is the 1958 Mercury – which Mr Gollings believes is the only one of its kind and worth around £6,000. Anyone with information is asked to call police on 101.

Action call on speeders

ROADS bosses have been urged to take action to stop speeding on a busy street.

Councillors have said measures are needed to make drivers slow down on High Street, Quarry Bank.

Councillor Bryan Cotterill said he had received reports about motorists going too fast and has requested talks with council highways officers.

He said one elderly man had been injured when a speeding car caused his car door to shut on his legs.

FOCUS ON NETHERTON AREA

Alf recalls the day he was shot by a Nazi in Normandy

CROUCHING behind a bush on the frontline in Normandy, Private Alf Dimmock felt 'something whistle past' his arm.

Moments later the teenager felt a piercing pain as a Nazi bullet ripped through his wrist – putting him on a boat home where he spend three months recovering from his wound.

He had been in battle for less than a week but still bears the scar to this day.

He refuses to visit the places he served in during the Second World War, but, at the age of 91, has received France's highest honour for his bravery.

Alf, from Quarry Bank, was presented with the medal during a ceremony at his local Labour Club.

The prestigious Legion d'Honneur is France's highest honour for service during the Second World War.

Alf saw action across Europe, Egypt and Palestine during his three years in the Army.

On June 8, 1944 – D-Day plus two – Private Dimmock landed on Sword beach in Normandy with the Queen's Regiment, aged just 18.

"I was only a little lad and I remember the water coming right up to my waist," he said. "We had to wade our way to the beach."

Just six days into the campaign in France, Mr Dimmock found himself fighting in the infamous Battle of Villers-Bocage – an allied attempt to exploit a gap in the German defences to the west of the city of Caen.

But before Alf even had a chance to fire his weapon in the battle, he was wounded and shipped back to England.

He said: "I was lying down with a rifle and I remember something going past. Next thing I knew I had been shot in the arm. The bullet went through one side of my right wrist and out the other."

Despite repeated attempts from friends and Quarry Bank Royal British Legion, he refuses to visit any of the places he served in. "I've seen more than enough of them," he quipped.

Alf married Hilda in 1952 but has since been widowed. He was a factory worker after the war.

By Jack Averty

Alf Dimmock, aged 91, who has received his Legion D'honneur medal, is congratulated by young relative Darcey Dunn, aged 7

Schools to figure out maths' best

MATHS magicians at 22 primary schools will battle it out to be crowned the best boffins in the borough.

Youngsters will tackle improper fractions, prime numbers, angles and everything else in between at Saltwells Education Centre in Netherton.

The annual Primary Dudley Inter-School Mathematics Championship is being held there on June 21.

It is split into two age groups, years three and four for seven to nines, and years five and six for those aged nine to 11.

Last year, Roberts Primary School, in Lower Gornal, won the younger category while Kingswinford-based Blanford Mere Primary School took the older category. Both schools are competing again this time around along with 20 others.

Bungalow bid behind pub

AN APPLICATION has been made to build a bungalow behind a pub in Netherton.

Under plans submitted to Dudley Council, the property would be build on land at the rear of the White Swan on Baptist End Road, Netherton.

The White Swan is also known locally at Turners.

The proposals will now be assessed by planning officers, before a decision is made by councillors later this year.

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Co-founder of Midlands Air Ambulance retires

At home, co-founder of the Midlands Air Ambulance Ian Nicholls, of Halesowen, who has now retired

'SEEING the helicopters go over, I feel proud for all the lives we saved and the lives the charity will continue to save.'

Those are the words of Ian Nicholls, from Halesowen, who helped set up the Midlands Air Ambulance Charity in 1991.

He has now retired after playing a huge role in growing the non-profit organisation. The 59-year-old was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis 28 years ago but 'Mr Air Ambulance' powered on as the charity went from barely off the ground to an average of 2,000 missions a year with three air ambulances serving the West Midlands.

"I started working for the ambulance service in '83, taking people to and from hospital," said Mr Nicholls. "I became a qualified ambulance man, as it was known then, and then worked my way up to become a paramedic. Being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1989 was a devastating blow – I thought my life had come to an end. I had to stop being a paramedic."

Mr Nicholls, who is wheelchair-bound and has his right arm as his only working limb, did a lot of fundraising and in 1989, started carrying out research on the feasibility of bringing an air ambulance to the Midlands.

"I set up an infrastructure of volunteers, a hotel chain came forward to help out and funded us for a month and then a fuel company did for another month," said Mr Nicholls. "Various groups then started fundraising. Over the years I met so many great people and families."

Mr Nicholls added: "I never thought I was the retiring type, because of my passion for the Midlands Air Ambulance Charity. I wanted to make a difference to the public, and that's something I think I managed to do."

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Broker builds a brighter future

APPRENTICES at a Brierley Hill insurance broker were at the forefront of celebrations for the opening of their new premises.

Insurance Protector officially launched their new office space in Quay House on the Waterfront where plans are now in place to more than treble its workforce in the next five years. This includes the recruitment of a further 10 apprentices in partnership with Stourbridge College.

Julie Tibbetts, employment skills adviser at Stourbridge College said: "By aligning apprenticeship programmes to their company growth, Insurance Protector has a solid foundation from which to develop their own experts to take forward their business values.

"The apprentices they have welcomed into their business over the last year are coming on in leaps and bounds and have excellent professional prospects ahead."

Cannabis factory gardener is given suspended prison term

A 'GARDENER' who helped cultivate a huge cannabis factory which could have produced more than £100,000 worth of the drug has been given a suspended prison sentence.

Kevin Upton was responsible for tending the 158 cannabis plants found at an industrial estate in Enterprise Drive, Lye.

Wolverhampton Crown Court heard it was a 'very large commercial enterprise' involving several tents, illegally extracted electricity supply and ventilation ducts.

Three men were arrested and charged but the other two had charges against them dropped. Upton, aged 31, of Cedar Road, Cannock, was given a 15 month prison sentence, suspended for two years.

He will have to carry out 200 hours of unpaid work within the next year and pay a total of £1,800 towards prosecution costs.

Upton had admitted being concerned in the production of cannabis on the basis he was the gardener.

Mr Timothy Harrington, prosecuting, said police attended the industrial estate on October 1, 2015, and noticed a strong smell of cannabis.

"They went to the front door and tried to open it," he explained. "This defendant and two other men tried to keep the door closed but the police got in. They found inside a significant cannabis factory. This involved the extraction of electricity, tents which had been set up, fans, heaters and ducts to ventilate the air.

"There were a total of 158 plants and most were near full maturity. The potential yield was estimated as between four and 13kg and would have been worth tens of thousands of pounds. The lowest estimate, if it had been sold in ounces, would be £28,000, but if it had been sold in large deals it could have been over £100,000."

Upton's DNA was found on a glove and a sleeping bag indicated someone was staying overnight to tend the plants, Mr Harrington said. Upton at first claimed he had nothing to do with the factory but pleaded guilty on the day of his trial.

Former butcher jailed for abuse

A FORMER butcher has been jailed after a jury convicted him of having sexually abused two young girls.

Lee O'Reilly had pleaded not guilty at Warwick Crown Court to a total of 13 charges of indecent assault – nine in relation to one girl and four in relation to a second victim. But after more than 11 hours over the course of three days, the jury found O'Reilly guilty of all 13 charges.

O'Reilly, aged 56 of the Hinksford Mobile Home Park, near Kingswinford, was jailed for five-and-a-half years and ordered to register as a sex offender for life.

The offences against one girl took place when she was 12 or 13, and against the other girl when she was nine or 10.

O'Reilly used to live in Nuneaton and worked as a butcher in that town.

Gardens are branching out

Ian Austin and Mayor Mohammed Hanif with trustee Charlie Hiken and Kristers Caune, aged 9

MAYOR of Dudley Councillor Mohammed Hanif, Labour Parliamentary candidate Ian Austin and school pupils got their hands dirty during a planting session in the Black Country.

The event was held to celebrate the funding Jasmine Community Gardens has received to enable the gardens to have a makeover.

Students from Beechwood Academy helped plant heritage apple and pear trees.

The gardens, which achieved charitable status last year, are undergoing an environmental makeover following investment from South Staffs Water and the Tesco Bags of Help scheme. A total of £8,000 was donated by Tesco and £1,700 from SSW.

Located in the heart of Dudley, the gardens were set up following the closure of the St Thomas' Network and are open for everyone to enjoy.

Organisers also run courses designed to teach people how to grow plants and vegetables and provide training for people.

Janet Hilken, chairperson of Jasmine Road Community Gardens, said: "It is an exciting time of transformation for the community gardens which have literally grown from strength to strength over the past year.

"The gardens have been a real benefit for everyone in the community, encouraging people to get outside and enjoy a healthy lifestyle."

New mayor backs Commonwealth bid

THE West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) has backed a bid to host the 2022 Commonwealth Games in the region.

The WMCA board, chaired by newly-elected West Midlands Mayor Andy Street, has agreed to formally endorse the bid for the event to come to Birmingham.

Birmingham had already been working to host the Commonwealth Games in 2026, but a replacement city is now being sought for the 2022 Games after host city Durban, in South Africa, relinquished its claim.

Mr Street, said: "For this bid to be successful, it's important the entire region gets behind it and that's exactly what we've done. I can't think of a more fitting showcase for our resurgent region in 2022 than to host one of the world's biggest sporting events.

"It was important we were quick out of the blocks on this bid and I would like to congratulate the bid team."

All the fun of the circus

YOUNG visitors to the County Museum at Hartlebury Castle, near Kidderminster, will be able to learn circus skills including juggling and stilt walking.

All the Fun of the Circus is running on bank holiday Monday (May 29) from 11am to 4pm.

There will also be circus-themed craft activities and an explorer trail on May 30 and June 1 from 10.30am to 4pm.

Family entry tickets are £13 and can be booked on 01299 250416.

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The Canberra after sliding off the runway at Seighford

A Nene-powered Vampire on Pendeford's grass runway

The Heritage Centre's Vampire after the Buckerburg crash

The Vampire jet ripping chunks of asphalt from runway

Vampire took a big bite out of runway

AT the Radials & Trainers Fly-in at Halfpenny Green Airport, a star visitor was a de Havilland Vampire jet trainer, the last one flying in this country.

As it took off to leave the event the jet exhaust ripped huge chunks of asphalt from the runway, an event captured by the camera of Gary Pearson, a Tettenhall Transport Heritage Centre member.

This was not the first time that this has happened locally. In the 1950s Wobaston Road firm Boulton Paul Aircraft was getting a lot of work modifying Canberra jet bombers which could not use the grass runways at Wolverhampton Airport, Pendeford.

Test

The company decided to use the old wartime airfield at Seighford, near Stafford as its Flight Test Centre, and put a Vampire on the runway to test it.

The little jet ripped the asphalt off, and the company had to re-surface the entire runway.

The Vampire, Britain's second jet fighter, sits very low on the ground, which did not help, but, ironically, was able to use the grass runways at Pendeford when Boulton Paul did some work on the fighter version.

MEMORY LANE

By Alec Brew

Seighford remained in use for nearly 10 years with both Canberras and Lightning jet fighters familiar sights, with only one mishap.

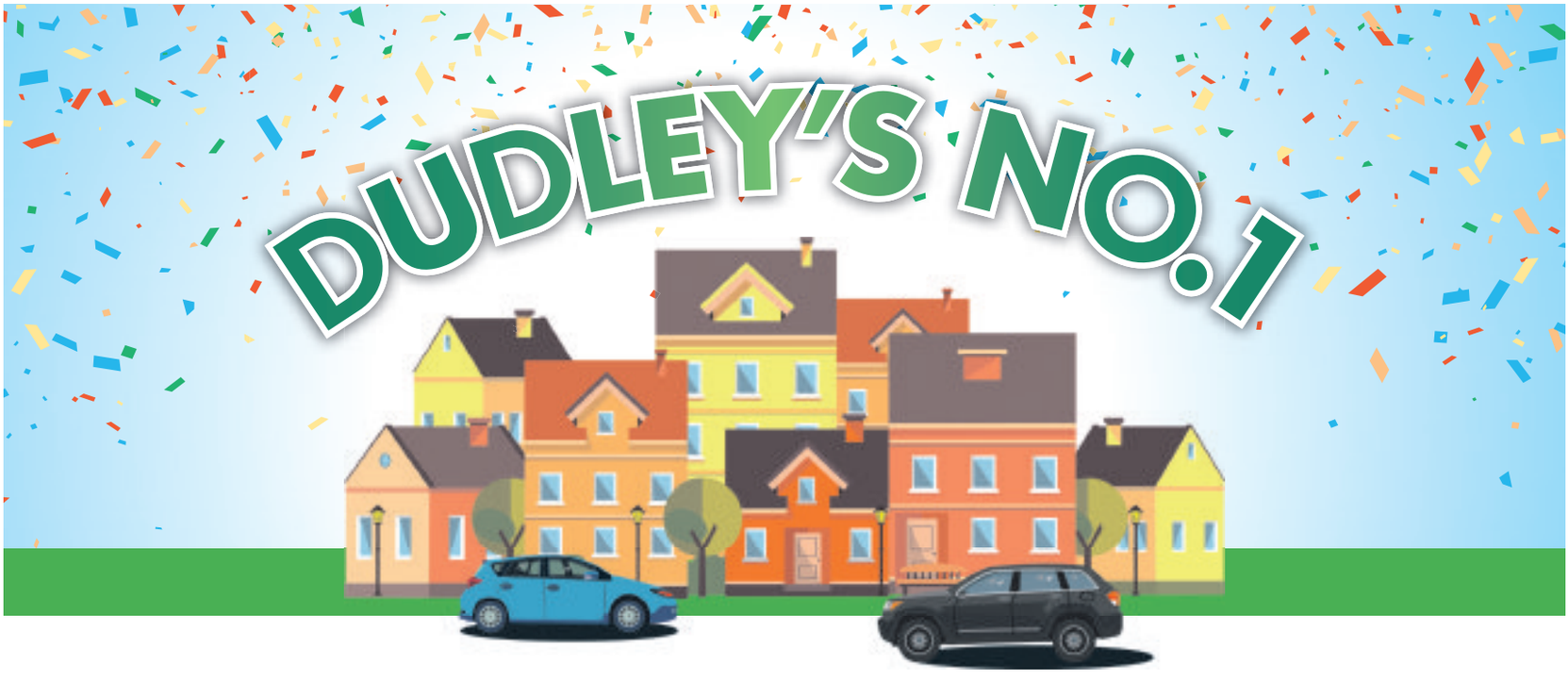
On New Year's Day 1960 Chief Test Pilot Ben Gunn suffered partial undercarriage failure on the Canberra he was testing and had to land with the main wheels only half down.

He slid off the end of the runway and hit a tree stump.

At the Heritage Centre visitors can sample the cockpits of both these aircraft types, there is the nose of one of the many Canberras modified by Boulton Paul, and there is a Vampire Jet trainer, just like the one which left Halfpenny Green with a hefty runway repair. Just one such visitor was David Dennison who travelled all the way from Somerset to sit in the actual Vampire which his father flew, and crashed.

Taking off from Buckerburg in Germany the little jet lost engine power and slid off the end of the runway. Fl Lt Dennison was unhurt and the Vampire was repaired.

David Dennison in the Vampire his father crashed



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Dudley CHRONICLE

Woods patrol volunteers needed for summer nights

MORE volunteers are needed to help patrol a Black Country beauty spot at night time during the summer.

Warley Woods Community Trust is now looking for extra people to patrol Warley Woods.

The voluntary roles would take place on summer evenings and people would be paired up together during the strolls.

The trust already has patrols but don't currently have enough positions to cover every day of the week.

A spokesman for the trust said the patrols were to reassure the public that there was a 'presence' and to answer questions about the trust and the site.

"We can't currently cover all nights of the week and so are always looking for new recruits. You'd be paired with someone who has already done this, so we wouldn't expect you to know everything on day one.

"If you are interested in a regular weekly stroll with someone, wearing trust hi-visibility clothing, then please let us know and we'll arrange a chat about it."

Events

To contact the trust, email kirstymack87@gmail.com

The trust is running a variety of events in the coming months.

A plant sale will take on Saturday in aid of the group and a 'Bake for the Woods' is taking place on June 3. A picnic will be held in the park on July 2, but the trust is also after volunteers who can lend a helping hand to run that event. The trust's tombola will also be held on the day of the picnic

Can you help? Extra volunteers are needed to help patrol Warley Woods during summer evenings

Fare cuts lead to more passengers

CUTS to bus fares on services in Sandwell and Dudley have proved successful enough for the scheme to be rolled out across the West Midlands, an operator says.

National Express said the trial of cheaper fares on buses around the boroughs had led to enough extra passengers to drive increased revenues on those routes.

That was despite the company's bus division as a whole seeing revenues fall by 0.5 per cent in the first four months of 2017.

The biggest cut in adult fares – at 35 per cent – affected the Sandwell and Dudley low fare zone day ticket which fell from £4.60 to £3 in February.

The children's ticket was cut by more than 50 per cent from £3.10 to £1.50. An adult weekly travelcard for journeys inside the zone fell from £15.70 to £11, and a child's weekly travelcard from £8.75 to £5.50.

National Express said it would "extend the lessons from these early successes further across the West Midlands".

Elsewhere, the transport giant saw its overall revenue from continuing operations rise by 5.4 per cent.

Huge court bill slapped on trader of fake Uggs

A TRADER who sold fake Ugg boots in the run up to Christmas, has been hit with a court fine after being convicted of trademark violations.

Scott Sutton, formerly of Newfield Road in Hagley, opened a unit in The Pavillions at Birmingham on Christmas Eve 2014 and lured customers in with branding identical to that used by the iconic Australian boot maker, plus an eye-catching 70 per cent discount offer.

Scott Sutton – £5,980 bill

He sold pairs at £50 each – all cash purchases as Sutton refused card payments – during a four-day sales spree before officers, acting on the concerns raised by a city centre PCSO, moved in to close the shop down.

Inquiries were made with Ugg's brand protection and legal advisors – who confirmed the store wasn't legitimate – and officers traced several customers tricked into believing the boots were genuine.

They included one 15-year-old girl who parted with her Christmas cash after being told by a sales assistant the boots were genuine but could be sold at knock-down prices as 'they weren't made at the real Ugg factory'.

Trading

Sutton was behind the till on December 27, 2014, when police swooped and in interview claimed he hadn't committed a criminal offence and that it was a matter for trading standards.

However, West Midlands Police investigators made three charges of unauthorised trademark use against the 49-year-old.

Sutton admitted the offences and at Birmingham Crown Court on May 2, was fined £5,000 and ordered to pay £980 in costs.

He faces being jailed for three months if he fails to pay the fine.

After the case was heard, Pc Min Patel, from Birmingham Police's Investigations Team, said: "It was a brazen fraud. He rented a unit in one of Birmingham's most prestigious shopping centres and placed Ugg signage in windows and above the door to add further credibility to the deception.

"The packaging was professional and Ugg labels had been stitched onto the boots. Most customers were left convinced this was a reputable business.

"Some shoppers may have suspected the boots were fake but were happy to part with their money for the name and not the quality.

"However, many customers felt ripped off that they had spent £50 or £100 on fake goods – and many of the purchases were Christmas presents for friends and family.

Police seized £7,000 in cash from Sutton's car while 100 pairs of Ugg boot fakes were recovered from the store.

Sutton refused to name the supplier.

Incident closed the M6

MOTORISTS faced huge delays on the M6 last Wednesday when a stretch of the motorway was shut near Birmingham throughout rush hour. The motorway was completely closed at Spaghetti Junction for nearly three hours while officers dealt with a woman who was spotted on a bridge over the road. The woman, described as 'vulnerable' by police, is now being looked after.

Wooden it be nice to turn profit in saleroom?

ANTIQUES AND COLLECTIBLES

with John Ridgway of Perry & Phillips

WE'VE talked a great deal in this column about the merits of gold, silver and precious stones – but never before about a much more humble material – namely wood!

But many wooden items are proving very collectable and therefore selling well in the saleroom.

Everything from decorated wooden spoons to vintage wood carvings, all are popular with the bidders.

Prices of wooden items depend on style, age and condition and on the quality of decoration on carved pieces.

Of course there are many different woods used and again this will affect the price – and if all the depressing news broadcast recently about the imminent demise of ash trees is taken on board then items made from this wood will soon prove very collectable indeed.

So let's start with some of the smaller items, such as those used in the kitchens and dining rooms of yesteryear.

Look out for Victorian sycamore ladles (you might find one that is actually dated), spice pots, fruitwood bowls and trays made from mahogany or satinwood – decorated trays and those with brass handles prove especially valuable. Tea caddies are extremely collectable, tea was a luxury product many years ago and caddies were produced of excellent quality in which to store it.

Carved oak or walnut candlesticks look lovely in any home, some feature very lovely and intricate decoration.

For your bedroom you could find mahogany jewellery boxes, olivewood lace boxes, vanity cases complete with silver-topped bottles and even an old bonnet stand, and for the bathroom you can buy some lovely old wooden towel rails for reasonable prices. Many people choose vintage items for their home studies or offices and pieces such as rosewood magnifying glasses, carved inkwells and Victorian deed boxes would complete the look.

As with all antiques, check for cracks, chips and signs of wear and tear before you buy – but remember that wooden pieces are relatively inexpensive to get professionally repaired.

Perry and Phillips hold valuation days, for sale items only, every Wednesday from 10am . The next Perry and Phillips sale of antiques and collectables takes place at the Mill Street saleroom in Low Town, Bridgnorth, on Tuesday, June 6. Viewing will be during the weekend and on Monday and also from 10am on auction day.

- **New sale bidders are advised to attends the saleroom early on auction day to register and be allocated a bidding number.**
- **Perry and Phillips hold sales on the first Tuesday of every other month.**

So much out there for 'neutral' baby clothing

Cuddle blankets are cute in beige

THIS week I became a grandma for the first time, our little bundle of joy was born three weeks early and was a healthy little girl. Mum and Dad had not wanted to know the sex beforehand and had kept the nursery and baby goodies in completely neutral colours.

I have thoroughly enjoyed looking at the delightful baby clothes available and pleasantly surprised by the amount of design put into these tiny items.

There are stunning ivory, beige, coffee, and pale grey garments printed with teddy bear faces and animal appliques, stars, spots and moons. Co-ordinating muslin cloths, towels and soft fleece blankets, even dribble bibs, scratch mitts and tiny socks carry detailed prints and colour. There was in fact less blue and pink than I had expected and highlights were soft orange, lime and lemon.

2017 sees tiny garments sporting tropical fruits such as melon and pineapple in bright sunny colours, colourful parrots and mosaic birds on white backgrounds. Graphic animals for boys and girls include crocodiles, elephants and giraffes of many types. Monochrome black and whites, eco neutrals, vintage pinks and lilacs with lavender sprigs and cottage garden prints, soft blues and duck egg embroidered dresses and neat collared shirts and plenty of super soft cardigans.

STYLE FOCUS

with Janet Timmis

Applique features strongly, 3D teddy bear heads, faces and flowers, ears on hoods and hats and elaborate detailed pockets. Traditional polo shirts for the boys and coloured "broiderie anglaise" frills for the girls. See http://www.jojomamanbebe.co.uk for some unusual designs and shapes with a European feel. Look at www.zara.com and www.next.co.uk for some great sleepsuits and accessories and www.dior.com for lovely traditional baby pyjamas and daywear.

The supermarkets offer fabulous value for money items and TK Maxx is well worth a visit too, little ones growing out of the garments before they can wear them more than a couple of times. There is so much choice out there!

Sleep sacks are fashionable, printed with primary stripes, colourful splodges and farm animals, made from the finest cool cottons, cuddle fleece blankets are just the softest ever and crib bottom sheets are velvety fine jerseys. Vintage quilting and knitted comforters are popular handmade items for the new addition and with the popularity of crafts there is sure to be knitted, crocheted and hand sewn gifts.

Teddy bears are available in every possible colour, with adorable faces. Checked, knitted and memory bears made from baby's first baby grow. Cuddle cloths are ever popular, easier for baby to hold and topped with cute animal heads and little brushed toys made to fit the tiny hands intended to hold them. Nothing is more wonderful than that tiny face peering up from the cot dressed in a crisp little sleep suit printed "I love my mummy and daddy".

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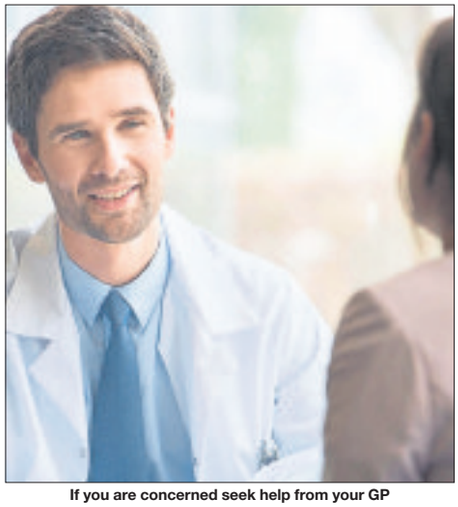
Stress and anxiety can lead to further health problems – or be a sign that you need to slow down and seek help

Stress and anxiety – can you tell the difference?



If you are concerned seek help from your GP

STRESS and anxiety are on the rise, but how do you tell them apart?

Stress is a normal part of life, and everybody will experience a sense of anxiety from time to time – but both these things can also be signs of mental health problems, or an indication that we possibly need to slow down or seek some support.

But how do you tell them apart? They can feel and exhibit themselves in a similar manner.

So if you're confused as to whether you're stressed or anxious, here are some key signs to look out for...

HOW TO SPOT STRESS

In the simplest terms, stress is caused by a specific factor, or "stressor" – for example, a major life change.

This can include any situation, event or scenario that makes you feel angry, frustrated, humiliated, nervous etc.

For example, moving house, starting a new job, a big meeting or exam you haven't prepped for, your mother-in-law has invited herself for Christmas.

Report by Ella Walker

These are actualities that directly cause you stress, usually because you feel unprepared for them, overwhelmed, or are struggling to find a way to deal with them.

Everyone gets stressed now and again.

It's a normal response to situations that frighten or worry you (which are different for everybody), but over time, if you are under constant amounts of stress, it can cause health worries.

Common symptoms (according to the NHS) include feeling irritable, fearful, low self-esteem, indecision, difficulty concentrating, headaches, dizziness, tiredness, appetite changes, short-tempered, racing-thoughts, physical tension

HOW TO SPOT ANXIETY

Anxiety can manifest itself even when you don't have something stressful to link it to, and instead, tends to present as an ongoing feeling of unease, or a sense of impending doom.

It's normal to feel a bit anxious or worried, for example, in scenarios that make you feel apprehensive, like speaking in public, confronting your boss, bungee jumping etc.

However, excessive anxiety – or generalised anxiety disorder – where you worry disproportionately and often without an obvious trigger, can severely disrupt day-to-day life.

Common symptoms (according to the NHS) are restlessness, sense of dread, feeling on edge, lack of concentration, feeling irritable, dizziness, tiredness, muscle aches, fast heartbeat, trembling and shaking, dry mouth, headaches, sweating, shortness of breath, nausea, pins and needles

HOW THEY'RE LINKED

Stress and anxiety often share symptoms, from tiredness and dizziness, to muscle aches and headaches, and both are connected to the fight-or-flight response, and neither are remotely enjoyable.

However, both conditions can be eased with the right treatment, from mindfulness and relaxation methods to release pressure and minimise stress, to medication and talking therapies for anxiety.

If you are struggling or concerned about how anxious or stressed you're feeling, always speak to your GP.

Cardigan man who seemed so familiar

Jon Richardson
Birmingham Hippodrome

JON Richardson, Old Man. What's he like, eh? Coming out with a cardigan on and then removing it to reveal another?

He defines age, he tells us, by what he wears and how he shops for it.

Oh, and shingles, of course. You don't get them unless you're of a certain age.

He also explained how he struggles to do more than one thing at a time, like watch the television and have a conversation, or move his shoulders and legs simultaneously while dancing.

Sentiment

There are many similarities between the comic and myself, such as stressing over trivial matters and a certain pernickety way of doing things, like tidying up as you go along, for example.

In his world there is his way of doing things, and there's the wrong way. A sentiment I found myself completely agreeing with!

He seems less stressed as he gets older though, he told the Hippodrome crowd, despite the travails of fatherhood.

The second half of the show was dedicated to such matters, but he ended the first with a dig at trolls who abuse him on Twitter, simply because 'he solves a few anagrams and word puzzles'. But he says they immediately make him feel better about himself.

MARK SHIPP

Shining light – Sheridan Smith was superb in the role as Fanny Brice

All-rounder Smith proves more than just Funny Girl

THEATRE REVIEWS

Funny Girl
Birmingham Hippodrome

THIS musical was always bound to be a success. With Sheridan Smith in the lead role it was a certainty.

She can act, sing and dance, and at the end the packed audience at the Hippodrome was up on its feet the second she walked back on stage to take a bow.

And it was very well deserved. Smith's portrayal as the comedienne and entertainer of the early 1900s, Fanny Brice, who dazzled on stage but battled through private problems, was spot on.

She took the audience on the journey with her through the performing highlights tempered by sorrow in her personal life.

She was backed by a superb cast, including her dapper husband Nick Arnstein played by platinum selling recording artist Darius Campbell and her mother, played by Rachel Izen. She and her card-playing friends were just ace.

Add to this the simple, but effective, staging, great costumes and superb dancing and this is a must-see. The story of the rising star Fanny is well-documented and made famous by the 60s film which starred Barbra Streisand. Any fears that Smith would be in her shadow were soon forgotten.

She seems to have the ability to play vastly different roles – in particular the harrowing Moorside which told the story of the kidnapping of Shannon Matthews and The More You Ignore Me, where she played a young mother with mental health issues – and mould herself perfectly into any role.

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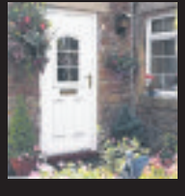

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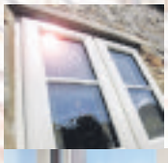

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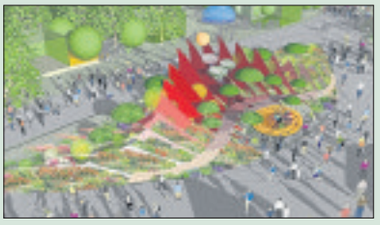
Inspiration from abroad at Chelsea



THERE'S a feast of foreign florals at this year's RHS Chelsea Flower Show, with influences from all over the globe – from China to Spain, Malta and Mexico.

While traditionally show gardens have gone for soft blues, subtle lilacs, creams and whites in their colour schemes, this year some designers are going for bolder hues of deep purple and burnt orange.

Here are some of the forthcoming Chelsea gardens inspired from further afield:

THE CHENGDU SILK ROAD GARDEN

This Chinese-inspired creation (pictured) is the biggest of the main show gardens and will be a showstopper, with its dramatic "Silk Road" bridge linking different elements, displaying some of the many plant species found in Sichuan Province, one of the most florally rich and diverse regions in the world.

THE M&G GARDEN

This garden, designed by James Basson, will feature a range of planting including grasses, trees, heathers, evergreens and flowers, to show how to rejuvenate hard mineral spaces in the extreme. Inspired by an abandoned Maltese quarry, there are monumental blocks of limestone, planted with grasses, evergreens, perennials and ground cover unique to the arid Mediterranean island. Yellow will feature heavily as it is the predominant colour of flowering plants in the Maltese spring.

THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE

An array of tropical planting is housed in this sharp, contemporary architectural garden, which mimics an active volcanic landscape reminiscent of Bermuda and the Caribbean. Four sections of laser-cut aluminium sheeting house vibrant planting, while purple and red LED lights strikingly illuminate the sections and a central palm.

THE ROYAL BANK OF CANADA GARDEN

Designed by Charlotte Harris, this show garden is inspired by the vast and ecologically vital boreal forest and freshwater lakes of Canada. The theme of the planting is led by the look and feel of the Canadian Boreal, featuring pines, larches and birch, with a natural-feel shrub under-storey.

Part shady woodland perennials to the rear of the garden give way to sunny planting reminiscent of that found along the rocky lake and river edges of the Boreal.

:: The RHS Chelsea Flower at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, runs from May 23 to 27.

For details, visit www.rhs.org.uk

Play out with grandkids

BRITAIN is well known for being a nation of garden lovers – the over 50s are perhaps the keenest gardeners of all – but they are just as likely to be playing with their grandchildren this summer.

Almost a third (32 per cent) have little ones over to play outdoors at least once a month, according to research by Saga Home Insurance. Grandparents from the North East are most likely to have grandchildren playing in their garden more than once a week (19 per cent) closely followed by grandparents in Yorkshire, Scotland (both 16 per cent) and the North West (15 per cent).

While we are often told that young people aren't getting enough exercise these days, the over 50s are championing good old fashioned play time by making sure the grandchildren get a decent gulp of fresh air whilst playing in paddling pools, on slides or in sandpits. In fact more than a quarter (27 per cent) of over 50s with grandchildren own some form of outdoor play equipment from the more common swing-ball sets to the more unusual putting greens and croquet lawns.

It's also clear that the over 50s like to make sure their green havens are beautifully decked out with almost half (49 per cent) admiring feathered friends in bird baths, one fifth (20 per cent) owning a BBQ or pizza oven and almost one in ten (eight per cent) staying one-step ahead of the British weather with a gazebo. After the grandchildren have gone home you might find some of the 880,000 over 50s who own hot tubs or hammocks taking a well-earned break.

Purple Allium 'lollipop' flowers are at the best on late spring or early summer

Ornamental onions that bring a splash of purple

BEST OF THE BUNCH – Allium

THESE late-spring early-summer lollipop flowers appear in shades of purple and white and make a great accent planted at intervals in borders. They are actually ornamental onions and can reach heights of up to 1.8m depending on the type. Bulbs should be planted in the autumn in a sheltered, sunny, well-drained site which won't get waterlogged. Their leaves become straggly before the blooms appear, so it's best to plant them with other plants whose foliage will mask the unsightly leaves. Good varieties include A. "Globemaster" and "Purple Sensation".

GOOD TO EAT – Harvesting asparagus

If you have an established asparagus bed which has been going for more than two years, you should now be harvesting delicious spears to steam and serve with hollandaise, or just on their own as a vegetable accompaniment that goes well with fish. Spears can be cut about 2.5cm under the soil for six weeks from mid April. For the best pickings, cut the spears when they are about 18cm tall. With a new asparagus bed, avoid harvesting the spears for the first two years to allow the crop to establish.

WHAT TO DO THIS WEEK

:: Take cuttings from summer-flowering clematis.

:: Plant out annual climbers.

:: Harden off hanging baskets and window boxes ready to put into position outdoors when all danger of frost is over.

:: Plant both dormant dahlia tubers and young plants.

:: Sow runner beans and dwarf kidney beans direct into the garden. Plants raised under glass should not be set out until the end of the month.

:: Make successional sowings of swedes and turnips, to produce crops from August to October.

:: Prune shrubs that have just finished flowering, including spiraea and Kerria japonica. They produce their flowers on shoots that formed last year.

:: Continue to deadhead spring-flowering bulbs.

:: Start to buy tender summer bedding now if you have somewhere to keep them protected.

: Clear blanket weed and duck weed from ponds.

Darling buds in full bloom during marvellous May

ROSS UNDERWOOD

Head Gardener at Hodnet Hall

"Straws like tame lightnings lie about the grass
And hang zigzag on hedges. Green as glass
The water in the horsetrough shines.
Nine ducks go wobbling by in two straight lines."

WHAT a profusion of flowers and foliage that this month brings.

May can be the kindest month for a gardener. The ground is warming up and it seems as though anything that you put in the ground will grow. In truth though you should take advantage of the benevolent conditions while they last. Any plant that you put in will need irrigating over the summer to stop it drying out.

When it comes to trying to pick out particular plant stars at this time of year is that there are so many. I am a huge fan of poppies and I grow many of the big blue Himalayan types with a great deal of mollycoddling. But if you look around under shrubs, or peeking out of stone walls there are the cheery yellow or orange blooms of Meconopsis cambrica, the Welsh Poppy. They have fine papery petals above small rosettes of divided foliage. Once you have them in your garden then they will often seed themselves around pleasantly filling in nooks and crannies without becoming a nuisance.

Another happy little filler for a sunny or shady spot is Tellima grandiflora which is a saxifrage relative that send up spires of pale greenish white flowers about 30cm tall from its rootstock. Again it is happy in sun or shade though it does go will with emerging fern fronds or the low foliage of late season perennials. It needs cutting back once it has done its thing and will produce a new cluster of leaves for the rest of the year.

Looking further down towards soil level Phlox divaricata is a North American plant which grows in clearings or at the edge of woodland where it can colonise large areas. I use it beneath large shrubs where it makes an excellent low growing ground cover. The flowers are quite large compared to the foliage and come in shades of pink, white or blue often with a pleasing scent. It is a tough customer and you might forget it was ever there by summer but it will be back next year as sure as sunshine.

Growing up the wall is one of my favourite climbing plants. Wisteria is often associated with more aristocratic gardens where large houses have high walls the better to contain what can be a rampant grower. Yet with the correct summer and winter pruning regime they can be fairly well contained. Your reward will be long racemes of flowers stretching over a foot long. Wisteria is a member of the pea family and this is clearly revealed in the shape of the flowers.

Malus trees are good news for people growing apples – and for birds seeking food, according to Ross

Wisteria sinensis is one of Ross's favourite varieties

The 'cheery yellow' Welsh poppy is making an appearance

Wisteria sinensis is my favourite. It has purplish blue flowers which the most delicious honey scent. Often, in August, it will produce a second flush of shorter racemes. Wisteria floribunda 'Alba' is an exceptionally elegant relevant and while I have found it less powerfully scented it does make a striking climber.

While the cherries are fading another group of flowering trees is taking over. Malus, or crab apples, are very floriferous small to medium growing trees for the most part. They make excellent pollination partners for dessert and culinary apples and the fruit can be use in cooking or provide a welcome food for birds. Malus transitoria is an upright growing tree which produces masses of white flowers from pink buds. By autumn it will have masses of small yellow fruit.

There is plenty to see in May. Hodnet Hall Gardens will be open throughout until the end of September on every Sunday and Bank Holiday Monday from noon till 5pm.

"I lie, not thinking, in the cool, sod grass,
Afraid of where a thought might take me – as
This grasshopper with plated face
U folds his legs and finds himself in space."

Top comedians for a summer of laughter

TOP comedians Ross Noble and Tom Stade are coming to Brierley Hill Civic Hall this summer.

Popular Canadian stand-up Stade, who used to live in Bilston, will top the bill at the latest Live At The Civic on Saturday, June 24.

He will replace America's Got Talent winner Paul Zerdin, who is currently in the US and has been forced to withdraw due to other commitments.

Stade will be supported on the night by Black Country favourite Doreen Tipton and The Noise Next Door, widely regarded as the best comedy improv troupe in the country. Dudley comic Wayne Beese will host the show.

More than 600 tickets have already been snapped up. Wayne said: "We are naturally disappointed that Paul has withdrawn from the show. Having sold so many tickets already, we pulled out all the stops to bring in a replacement that people would be happy with.

Doreen

"We feel we have done that with Tom Stade. He is one of the most popular stand-ups in the country and one of the very best. With Doreen and The Noise Next Door as well, we have a line-up that will rival anywhere in the land on that night."

Meanwhile, TV comic Ross Noble is to headline a huge night of comedy at Brierley Hill Civic Hall on Friday, July 14, as a showpiece event of this year's Black Country Festival.

The Geordie funny man, who has appeared on TV shows including Live At The Apollo, Have I Got News For You and QI, will be supported by local favourite, Jonny Cole, Darren Harriott from Oldbury and Mike Crump, from Dudley, with Wayne Beese as MC.

To book, or for further information, visit www.bhillcivic.co.uk/whats-on/comedy

Ross Noble

Tom Stade

Shoplifter threatened staff

AN HABITUAL criminal who was banned from Dudley town centre has been jailed after being caught shoplifting.

Samantha Walker stole meat from the Asda branch on High Street, Dudley, and cheese from a Spar shop in Gornal.

By going into Asda on March 31, Walker, aged 26, was also breaching her town centre ban.

She was also seen in the town centre on April 14 and April 18 and was subject to suspended prison sentence at the time, magistrates in Dudley were told.

The court heard when she went into the Spar on April 15, she told staff she had HIV and threatened to stab them with a 'dirty needle'.

Walker, of Kingford Rise, Upper Gornal, pleaded guilty to two counts of theft and three counts of breaching a criminal behaviour order.

She was jailed for six months and ordered to pay costs of £115.

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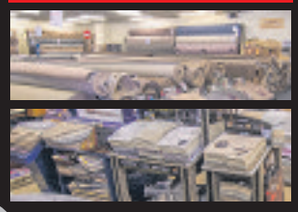

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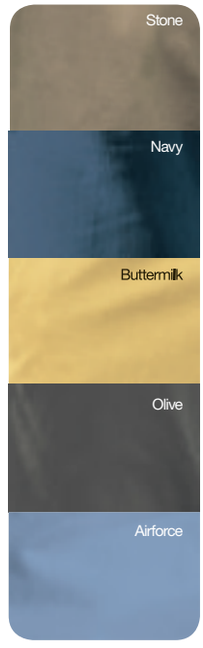

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STAGE FRIGHT: THE WOMAN IN BLACK

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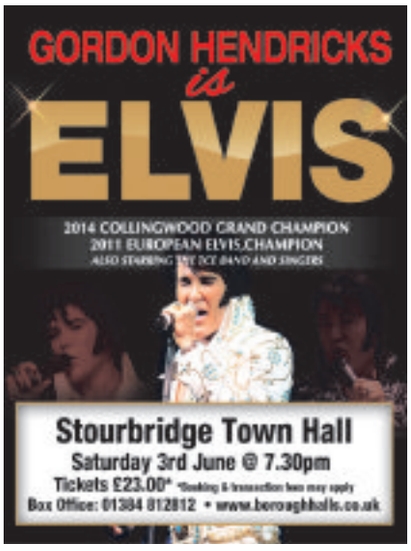


When the audience screams, it's fantastic

Stephen Mallatratt's adaptation of Susan Hill's best-selling novel, The Woman In Black, has terrified more than million theatregoers since it first opened in the West End.

Robin Herford's gripping production is a brilliantly successfully study in atmosphere, illusion and controlled horror.

The unanimously acclaimed stage production is on the road and will arrive at the Grand Theatre, in Wolverhampton, from Monday until May 27.

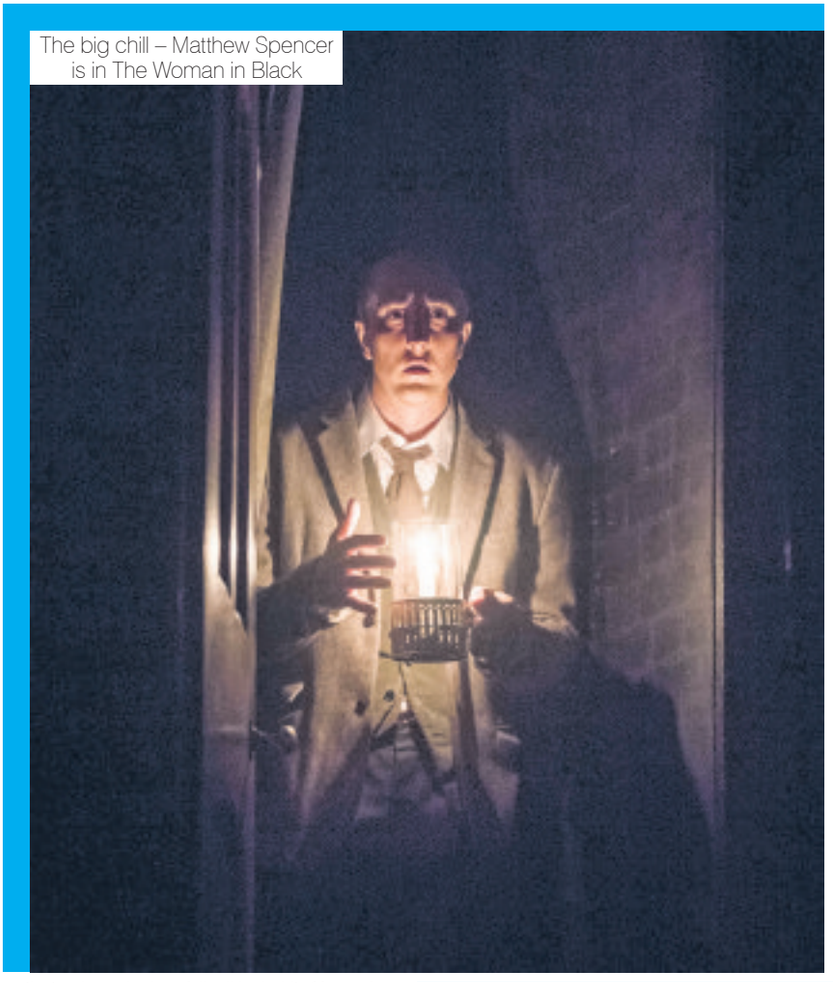
The touring cast features David Acton, as Mr Kipps, and Matthew Spencer, as The Actor.

The production's popularity has reached a global level, having toured the United States, South America, Tokyo and Singapore.

In 2012, Susan's novel The Woman in Black was turned into a film starring Daniel Radcliffe, which became the highest grossing British horror movie in 20 years. The sequel to that, The Woman in Black 2: Angel Of Death, came out in 2014.

It tells the story of a lawyer obsessed with a curse that he believes has been cast over him and his family by the spectre of a Woman in Black. He engages a young actor to help him tell his story and exorcise the fear that grips his soul. It begins innocently enough, but as they delve further into his darkest memories, they find themselves caught up in a world of eerie marshes and moaning winds. The borders between make believe and reality begin to blur and the flesh begins to creep.

We caught up with David and Matthew to find out what makes them leap out of their skin – and what they love about The Woman in Black.


The big chill – Matthew Spencer is in The Woman in Black

Do you believe in ghosts?

Matthew Spencer: "For me, I would say 'ghosts? No way . . .' but I really like to think they're real. I don't like being in the stage right wing of the Fortune Theatre, where the Woman In Black plays in London. It's a little bit cold . . ."

What do you think it is about The Woman in Black that keeps people returning for second, third or more visits?

David Acton: "There's certainly the chill factor, which people love but there are so many reasons. It's a brilliant play, it's extraordinary, and probably cleverer than the writer Stephen Mallatratt had anticipated. What comes out of nothing, an empty theatre arises this beautifully written story with a myriad of different characters and locations all created by the imagination. It's a touching and moving story with a great sadness about it – there's loss, shrieks and bumps along the way but there are laughs and pleasure along the way and the theatricality brings all of that together perfectly."

Matthew Spencer: "You can see the film and you can read the book but this live experience is something you won't get from either of those – there's something magical about the fact that just two people and a few props can create the different settings and play all the characters."

Having played in the small 450 seat Fortune Theatre in London, do you think the dynamic of the play will differ when toured to much larger theatres in the country?

Matthew Spencer: "I think each new venue will bring something entirely new to the piece, for us as well as the audience. The show is very much part of the Fortune Theatre now, but taking it out on tour will be interesting to see what more space or less space does."

David Acton: "I always say for any actor it's important to tour, because if you've played big, small, wide, tall, thin, deep stages you get a real knowledge for how to work different venues."

Whereas horror films are very common, horror plays are almost unheard of. How difficult is it to recreate the horror on stage that can be done rather easily with a computer in a film?

Matthew Spencer: "The play is so well written that a lot of the horror comes right from the text. The start of the play is quite light, it's an opportunity for us as actors to get the audience on board. By the time we start to build up the tension we've hopefully all had a bit of fun, we're all on the same side and then you can really start to get down to business! It's so well constructed that I never feel a pressure to make anyone scared, that just happens. I get excited for, because I know what's coming, and I find that if the audience are laughing loudly at the beginning they're usually screaming loudly half way through!"

Is it fun for you, seeing the audience react?

David Acton: "It's great, the screams are fantastic, particularly when we have school groups in! The book is on the curriculum so it's quite often that we'd have a school's matinee and they love to scream and so they scream again, look at each other and scream again!

Matthew Spencer: Equally, it does terrify adults! The reactions are all part of it, and help make it what it is and we live for those moments. It's great to see the power of live theatre working and having the desired effect."

Is there anything in the production that scares you, as actors?

Matthew Spencer: "What scares me more than anything is the theme of the play. I know what's coming and when so for me it's about the loss that the story centres around. The first time we ever did a full run-through on stage at the Fortune Theatre was rather scary, I was genuinely scared with all of the sounds and the lights and I think the people who worked on the show enjoyed making the most of that. Now we're settled into it, I take enjoyment from the audience reactions!"

> *I don't have nightmares but some actors have had horrible ones*

Do you have any post-show rituals that help you to recover from what you've just been through?

Matthew Spencer: "I've mentioned that the structure of the play helps to make the most of the scary moments but in equal parts it helps in a sense that we reach a conclusion. It's a very rounded play, we've told the full circle – there's nothing hanging or unfinished so we're quite satisfied when we're done."

David Acton: "I certainly don't have nightmares but I've heard stories from past actors who have had horrible ones!"

● The Woman in Black is at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre from Monday May 22 – 27. Tickets are available in person at the Box Office, by calling 01902 42 92 12 or online at grandtheatre.co.uk.

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas

Heartbreaking war story will be told through dance

The world premiere of Northern Ballet's The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas will take place in Wolverhampton this month.

The touring ballet company is re-imagining John Boyne's best-selling novel in a heart-breaking brand new production.

The first full-length dance adaptation of this world famous story, will take place in Wolverhampton at the Grand Theatre on May 30 and 31.

Telling the story of an unlikely friendship blossoming through the disturbing events of World War II, The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas sees a child's innocent curiosity lead to a devastating conclusion.

Previously adapted for a 2008 film by Miramax, this world-first dance adaptation will be choreographed by Northern Ballet's Artistic Associate Daniel de Andrade.

It will feature an original score by Oscar-nominated composer Gary Yershon, sets and costumes designed by Mark Bailey and lighting by Tim Mitchell, with Dramatic Coach Patricia Doyle also joining the creative team.

The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas will be the second of an unprecedented three full-length world premières to be held by Northern Ballet in 2017 following the World Première of Casanova in March 2017 and the upcoming World Première of The Little Mermaid in September 2017.

Northern Ballet will also present a children's ballet, Goldilocks and The Three Bears on May 31 at 12:30 and 2:30pm. Tickets cost £11.50 for The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas and £8.50 for Goldilocks and The Three Bears are now on sale now and can be booked in person at the box office, online at grandtheatre.co.uk or by calling 01902 42 92 12.

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Thieves now ready to steal a lead

Following the success of their almighty self-titled debut album, Southend's Nothing But Thieves are back on tour as they prepare to release their second album, Broken Machine, later this year.

The first single from it, a soaring rock anthem entitled Amsterdam, marks their stunning return, as they prepare for an already sold out gig at Birmingham's 02 Institute 2 next Friday, May 26.

The band fronted by singer Conor Mason (pictured) in a joint statement say of the new single: "It was inspired by our love of direct, guttural choruses.

"It's like Conor is spitting the words in your face.

"It's visceral and has momentum but also this beautiful moment in the middle which feels like a break in a sea storm.

"We didn't have all the pieces before going in to the studio and this was one of the tracks that really came alive during the recording progress. It pretty much demanded to be our first song."

To say Nothing But Thieves have been on an epic journey over the past 18 months is an understatement.

The Essex band's debut album has sold over 250,000 and has streamed over 174 million tracks globally to date.

The band were chosen to tour with Muse – with whom they certainly share some musical DNA – and have played festivals in Europe, the US and even South Korea, where they played to more than 20,000 people.

The five-piece spent a big chunk of 2016 in America, where their album was the best selling debut that year from any UK rock band, playing shows and performing on TV shows as guests of Conan O'Brien, James Corden and Jimmy Kimmel.

They will be visiting the Digbeth venue as part of their warm up for major festival appearances this summer and shows to support the release of Broken Machine in September.

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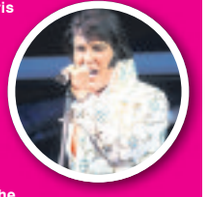
Gordon as Elvis in tribute to the King



One of the world's top Elvis tributes brings his show – Gordon Hendricks is Elvis – to Stourbridge Town Hall next month. Stoke-born Gordon was propelled into the big time by winning the final of TV show Stars In Their Eyes in 2005. He went on to win the 2011 European Elvis championship and the 2014 Collingwood festival in Canada. His show in Stourbridge on June 3, with full band, features the King's classics from the '50s, 60s and 70s. See www.boroughhalls.co.uk or call 01384 812812.

Your invitation to hear The Wedding Singer

Broadway musical The Wedding Singer, based on the 1998 movie that starred Adam Sandler and Drew Barrymore, is at Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre from Tuesday to Saturday, May 23 to 27.

Set in the 1980s with music to match, it stars Jon Robyns (from Memphis and Les Miserablés in the West End) as a disastrous wedding singer facing losing sweet Julia (X Factor's Cassie Compton) to oily Wall Street bad boy Glenn (X Factor's Ray Quinn). But not if Grandma Rosie (Hi-De-Hi's Ruth Madoc) can help it.

Meanwhile, La Cage Aux Folles continues at Birmingham Hippodrome until Saturday, before moving to Wolverhampton Grand from June 27 to July 1, and The Who's rock opera Tommy gets a revamp at Birmingham Rep until May 27.

SATURDAY'S TV MAY 20

CHOICE

Aisling Franciosi (left)

Clique
(BBC1, 10.10pm)
New series. Holly and Georgia have been best friends since the age of 11, so when it came time for them to leave home and head to university, it was obvious they should apply to the same academy. As the pair enjoy their first couple of weeks of freedom, they find themselves drawn to an elite clique of alpha girls, led by lecturer Jude McDermid. Drama, starring Synnove Karlsen, Aisling Franciosi, Sorcha Groundsell, Ella-Rae Smith, Sophia Brown, Rachel Hurd-Wood, Emma Appleton, Harris Dickinson, Peter Bankole, Louise Brealey, Emun Elliott, Chris Fulton, Mark Strepan, Jack Bannon, Nadia Faccenda, Orla Bayne, Evie Brassington, Euan Gilroy and Jasmine Main.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen. **11.30** Mary Berry's Absolute Favourites. (R) **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **2.15** Escape to the Country. (R) **3.15 Film:** Wreck-It Ralph. (2012) Animated adventure, with the voice of John C Reilly. **4.45 Film:** Monsters University. (2013) Animated comedy prequel, with the voices of John Goodman and Billy Crystal.
6.20 BBC News.
6.30 Regional Programme.
6.35 Pointless Celebrities. Alexander Armstrong and Richard Osman invite figures from the world of musical theatre to take part in the unorthodox general knowledge quiz, in which contestants must guess the least likely correct answers given to questions posed to members of the public. Lyricists Tim Rice and Don Black join forces, while How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria winner Connie Fisher teams up with her former rival Siobhan Dillon. Former Chicago star Claire Sweeney pairs with comedy actor and one-time Wicked star Nigel Planer, and Cory English, the American actor who recently starred in a UK tour of The producers, collaborates with comedian and Spamalot star Phill Jupitus.
7.25 Doctor Who. The Doctor receives an unexpected appeal for help from the Vatican when the translation of an ancient tome said to cause anyone who reads it to die leaks onto the internet.
8.15 Who Dares Wins. Nick Knowles challenges two pairs of complete strangers to team up, and battle it out to list as much as they know about a given subject.
9.00 Casualty. Hugo runs away when he find out his father Jim is planning to take him back, and Lily returns to work, but fails to notice tell-tale track-marks on her first patient's arm.
9.50 BBC News; Weather.; National Lottery Update.
10.10 Clique. New series. Two best friends are drawn into an elite clique of alpha girls led by lecturer Jude McDermid in their first few weeks at university.
10.55 Clique.
11.40 Film: Insomnia. (2002)
1.35 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.40** BBC News.

BBC2

6.20 Film: The Charge of the Light Brigade. (1936) **8.10 Film:** Kismet. (1955) **10.00** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **11.00** Monty Halls' Great Hebridean Escape. (R) **12.00** Great British Menu. (R) **12.30** Great British Menu. (R) **1.00** Hitchcock's Leading Actors: Talking Pictures. (R) **1.30 Film:** North By Northwest. (1959) Hitchcock thriller, starring Cary Grant. **3.45** Flog It! (R) **4.10** Trust Me, I'm a Vet. (R) **5.10** Gardeners' World. (R)
6.10 Natural World. Exploring efforts by conservationists and scientists to protect wildlife including turtles, dolphins and monk seals in Hawaii's surf zone, as its marine animals face a growing threat from washed-up plastic. This comes on top of creatures having to cope with an increasing number of visitors to beaches. With a contribution by Hawaii-born musician Jack Johnson. (R)
7.00 Mexico: Earth's Festival of Life. Exploring the wildlife, landscape and culture in three distinct areas of the country. (R)
8.00 Yorkshire Wolds Way with Paul Rose. Part two of two. Adventurer Paul Rose concludes his exploration of the 79-mile Yorkshire Wolds Way, taking to the skies to get a unique view of its stretch of chalk downland.
8.30 Dad's Army. Captain Mainwaring organises a dance in an attempt to boost platoon morale, but Pike interrupts proceedings to make an important announcement regarding his girlfriend Violet. (R)
9.00 Film: Philomena. (2013) A teenager in 1950s Ireland becomes pregnant, and is sent to a home for "fallen women", while her baby is forcibly taken from her and sent to America to be adopted. Fifty years later, she meets a disillusioned political journalist who helps to reunite her with her son. Fact-based drama, starring Judi Dench and Steve Coogan.
10.35 QI XL. An extended edition, in which question-master Stephen Fry probes the subject of Messing with Your Mind, with Sarah Millican, Tommy Tiernan, Josh Widdicombe and Alan Davies.
11.20 Versailles. King Louis XIV's continued insomnia makes him increasingly volatile. (R)
12.20 Film: Cabaret. (1972) **2.20** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Bottom Knocker Street. **6.10** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.25** Sooty. (1955) **10.00** Homes Under the Hammer. (R) **11.00** Monty Halls' Great Hebridean Escape. (R) **12.00** Great British Menu. (R) **12.30** Great British Menu. (R) **1.00** Hitchcock's Leading Actors: Talking Pictures. (R) **1.30 Film:** North By Northwest. (1959) Hitchcock thriller, starring Cary Grant. **3.45** Flog It! (R) **4.10** Trust Me, I'm a Vet. (R) **5.10** Gardeners' World. (R)
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12.20 Film: Cabaret. (1972) **2.20** This Is BBC Two.

CHANNEL 4

6.15 Motor Sport: Mini Challenge. **6.45** Mobil 1 The Grid. **7.10** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.05** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Frasier. (R) **10.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **10.55** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.25** The Simpsons. (R) **11.55** The Simpsons. (R) **12.30** The Simpsons. (R) **1.00** Come Dine with Me. (R) **1.30** Come Dine with Me. (R) **2.00** Come Dine with Me. (R) **2.30** Come Dine with Me. (R) **3.00** Come Dine with Me. (R) **3.35** A Place in the Sun: Summer Sun. (R) **4.35** Big House, Little House. **5.40** Location, Location, Location. (R)
6.35 Channel 4 News.
7.00 The Restoration Man. George Clarke meets a man in Northumberland who bought a Victorian railway station, with the intention of converting it into a family home. He has managed to keep his budget down by doing all the building work single-handed at weekends, but the project has been threatened by planning restrictions. George also looks into the history of the station, and finds out why it never fulfilled its potential as part of the area's rail network. (R)
8.00 Walks with My Dog. Bill Bailey returns to his West Country roots for a walk on Exmoor with his dog Louie, while Newsnight presenter Kirsty Wark takes in the tranquility of the Isle of Arran. Plus, Julian Clary and his Jack Russell visit the South Downs. Previously seen on More4.
9.00 Film: The Heat. (2013) An uptight, ambitious FBI agent is sent to Boston to bring a notorious drug kingpin to justice. She ends up forced to team up with a rebellious, foul-mouthed local police detective who has a very different attitude to law enforcement but shares her inability to work with others. Action comedy, starring Sandra Bullock and Melissa McCarthy.
11.25 Film: Bullet to the Head. (2012) A hitman and a police detective join forces to seek revenge on the man who murdered both their partners. Action thriller, with Sylvester Stallone.
1.05 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. (R) **1.50** Hollyoaks. (R) **3.55** Location, Location, Location. (R) **4.50** Shipping Wars UK. (R) **5.15** Fifteen to One. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **9.50** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **10.00** The Fairly OddParents. (R) **10.35** The Gadget Show. (R) **11.30** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.30** Police Interceptors. (R) **1.30** Police Interceptors. (R) **2.30** FIA Formula E Live: 2017 Paris ePrix. The Paris ePrix. **4.15** The Nightmare Neighbour Next Door. (R) **5.15** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. (R)
6.10 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. The officers try to recover £13,000 owed by a high-performance car dealer in Birmingham, and in Wolverhampton the agents chase nearly £2,000 owed to a car hire company. Elsewhere, officers visit a family in Kent to try to collect more than £5,000, but an emotional backstory means they are forced to make a sensitive decision. (R)
7.10 NCIS: Los Angeles. Kensi and Deeks go undercover as a married couple in a quiet suburb as part of an investigation into a Russian sleeper cell.
8.00 NCIS. A 14-year-old boy manages to foil a home invasion, but when Gibbs is called in to investigate, he suspects the teenager may be withholding crucial information. As the case makes progress, Gibbs turns his attention to helping the boy's mother, the wife of a naval officer, and his efforts result in an invitation to the White House to meet the First Lady (Michelle Obama, guest starring as herself). Meanwhile, Director Vance and FBI Agent Fornell travel to London as part of the ongoing case involving the escaped British spies.
8.55 5 News Weekend.
9.00 Most Shocking Celebrity Moments of the 80s. The most infamous TV moments of the 1980s, including the disastrous Brit awards hosted by Samantha Fox and Mick Fleetwood, Simon Le Bon's nautical misadventures and the concert where Ozzy Osbourne famously bit the head off a bat. With contributions from Anthea Turner, Linda Lusardi, Rick Wakeman, Jennie Bond, Nathan Moore, Su Pollard and Paul Burrell. (R)
11.50 Football on 5: The Playoffs. Bradford City v Millwall.
12.15 SuperCasino. **3.05 Film:** The New Daughter. (2009) **4.50** House Doctor. (R) **5.15** Wildlife SOS. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Saints and Sinners: Britain's Millennium of Monasteries **8.00** Masters of the Pacific Coast: The Tribes of The American Northwest **9.00** Hinterland **10.30** Top of the Pops: 1983 **11.35** Easy Listening Hits at the BBC **12.40** Glen Campbell: The Rhinestone Cowboy **1.40** An Evening with Glen Campbell **3.00** Easy Listening Hits at the BBC **4.00** Close
ITV2
11.05 Britain's Got Talent **12.25** Britain's Got More Talent **1.30** Take Me Out **2.45** Take Me Out – The Gossip **3.45** You've Been Framed! Gold **4.15 Film:** Mr Bean's Holiday (2007) **5.15** FYI Daily **5.20 Film:** Mr Bean's Holiday (2007) **6.05 Film:** Step Up (2006) **7.05** FYI Daily **7.10 Film:** Step Up (2006) **8.15** Scorpion **9.20** Britain's Got More Talent **10.20** Celebrity Juice **11.20** Family Guy **12.45** American Dad! **1.45** Through the Keyhole **2.35** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **3.00** Teleshopping
ITV3
11.55 Film: Carry On Henry (1971) **1.00** FYI Daily **1.05 Film:** Carry On Henry (1971) **1.45** A Touch of Frost **3.55** Lewis **5.55** Rosemary & Thyme **7.00** Midsomer Murders **9.00** Foyle's War **11.05** Law & Order: UK **2.05** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping
ITV4
11.00 The Classic Car Show **11.55** The Car Chasers **12.55** Counting Cars **1.50** Storage Wars **2.50 Film:** Apache (1954) **3.50** FYI Daily **3.55 Film:** Apache (1954) **4.35 Film:** The Horse Soldiers (1959) **5.35** FYI Daily **5.40 Film:** The Horse Soldiers (1959) **7.00** The Sweeney **8.05** Better Late Than Never **9.00 Film:** Navy Seals (1990) **10.05** FYI Daily **10.10 Film:** Navy Seals (1990) **11.20 Film:** From Dusk Till Dawn (1996) **12.20** FYI Daily **12.25 Film:** From Dusk Till Dawn (1996) **1.25** Quincy ME **2.25** Tommy Cooper **2.55** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping
E4
2.20 Rude(ish) Tube Shorts **2.30** The Goldbergs **5.00** The Big Bang Theory **9.00 Film:** Limitless (2011) **11.05** Gogglebox **1.15** Rude Tube **2.15** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **3.05** How I Met Your Mother **3.50** Charmed
Film4
11.00 The Quick Gun (1964) **1.00** Just Wright (2010) **3.05** Spy Kids 4: All the Time in the World (2011) **4.45** The Four Musketeers (1974) **6.55** One Day (2011) **9.00** Non-Stop (2014) **11.05** Ouija (2014) **12.50** The Breakfast Club (1985) **2.55** Close

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SUNDAY'S TV MAY 21

CHOICE

Michael Gould

The Trial: A Murder in the Family
(Channel 4, 9pm)
New series. Drama-documentary in which a fictional murder case is tried in a real court, with Michael Gould playing defendant Simon Davis in front of a real judge, jury, QCs and expert witnesses. The first episode sees police officers and eye witnesses called on to give testimony and build up a picture of the day the victim was strangled to death in her own home. Continues tomorrow.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** Bargain Hunt. (R) **1.00** BBC News; Weather. **1.15** Money for Nothing. (R) **2.00** Escape to the Country. (R) **3.00** Shop Well for Less? (R) **4.00** Lifeline. **4.10** Points of View. **4.25** Songs of Praise. **5.00** RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2017.

6.00 BBC News.

6.20 Regional Programme.

6.30 Countryfile. Matt Baker explores the rise and fall of the orchards in the Clyde Valley. Ellie Harrison explores some of Scotland's oldest forests and meets an urban beekeeper, and Sean Fletcher visits a traditional mill using machinery that is centuries old. Adam Henson and Charlotte Smith visit an agricultural project in Newport Pagnell and Tom Heap reports on the problem of microplastics in the ocean.

7.30 Antiques Roadshow. Fiona Bruce presents a second show from Ightham Mote near Sevenoaks, where finds include a gold ring containing a lock of Lord Byron's hair, a collection of postcards from 1916 that reveal how a British PoW sent messages to his family, and a pair of Chinese paintings that make a big impression on specialist David Battie.

8.30 Inspector George Gently. The first of two final cases for the detective, played by Martin Shaw. On the brink of retirement, Gently re-opens the case of a woman convicted of killing her husband, hoping to uncover a long-buried miscarriage of justice. However, the investigation places Gently's career on the line and stirs up tension with Bacchus, who worked on the original investigation.

10.00 BBC News.

10.20 Regional Programme.

10.30 Match of the Day. Gary Lineker presents highlights of the final day of the Premier League season, with matches including Hull City v Tottenham Hotspur and Swansea City v West Bromwich Albion.

12.15 Murder in Successville. Professor Green helps DI Sleet with a particularly unusual case as Successville's resident superhero the Rattman battles his arch-enemy the Termite – whose identity is a mystery. **12.45** The Women's Football Show. **1.20** Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.25** BBC News.

BBC2

6.05 A to Z of TV Gardening. (R) **6.50** The Instant Gardener. (R) **7.35** Gardeners' World. (R) **8.35** The Beechgrove Garden. **9.05** Countryfile. (R) **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **11.30** Great British Menu. (R) **12.00** Great British Menu. (R) **12.30** Great British Menu. (R) **1.00** NW200 Highlights. **2.00 Film:** None But the Brave. (1965) Second World War adventure, starring Frank Sinatra. **3.45** Galapagos – Islands of Change: Natural World. (R) **4.30** Final Score. **5.30** Flog It! (R)

6.00 Inside the Factory: How Our Favourite Foods Are Made. The exploration of three household staples continues as Gregg Wallace goes inside a chocolate factory in York, which produces a staggering seven million bars every day. He follows the 24-hour journey from bean to bar and meets the people who work round the clock. Cherry Healey helps out on a production line in Derbyshire, where chocolate boxes are still made by hand, and historian Ruth Goodman delves through the archives to find out what it was like working in factories before machines took over. (R)

7.00 Dragons' Den. Evan Davis presents the business ideas contest, with the panel considering the potential of plans for miniature pencils, giant beanbags and boot-cleaning machines. (R)

8.00 Mexico: Earth's Festival of Life. The deserts of Mexico's northern region, home to animals like prairie dogs, pygmy owls and aplomado falcons that have adapted to thrive in these arid conditions. Last in the series.

9.00 Dara and Ed's Road to Mandalay. Dara O Briain and Ed Byrne arrive in Myanmar, where they take part in a Buddhist festival and have their fortunes read before finally reaching Mandalay. Last in the series.

10.00 Film: The Homesman. (2014) Premiere. A frontier woman persuades an outlaw to help her lead three traumatised women across the wilderness. Western, directed by and starring Tommy Lee Jones, with Hilary Swank.

11.55 Film: Love Is All You Need. (2012) Romantic drama, with Pierce Brosnan and Trine Dyrholm.

1.45 Sign Zone: Question Time. (R) **2.45** Holby City. (R) **3.45** This Is BBC Two.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Bottom Knocker Street. **6.10** Bottom Knocker Street. (R) **6.25** Sooty. (R) **6.35** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **6.40** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **6.50** Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures. (R) **7.00** Oddbods. (R) **7.05** Marvel Avengers Assemble. (R) **7.30** Thunderbirds Are Go. (R) **7.55** Ben 10. **8.10** Ben 10. **8.25** ITV News. **8.30** Weekend. **9.25** Countrywise. (R) **10.00** Peston on Sunday. **11.00** Judge Rinder. (R) **12.00** ITV News; Weather. **12.05** Tipping Point. (R) **1.05** Who's Doing the Dishes? (R) **2.05** The Chase. (R) **3.05** Britain's Got Talent. (R) **4.20 Film:** The Man with the Golden Gun. (1974) James Bond adventure, starring Roger Moore and Christopher Lee.

6.40 Regional Programme; Weather.

6.45 ITV News; Weather.

7.00 Bigheads. Jason Manford hosts the comedy game show in which contestants compete in a series of bizarre physical challenges while wearing giant model heads of Donald Trump, Theresa May, and David and Victoria Beckham. They must dodge past giant bouncers to get into a nightclub, fight over microphones to record a single, and get away before the paparazzi see them. With commentary from Jenny Powell and Kriss Akabusi.

8.00 The Durrells. Hugh organises a cricket match between Greek and English teams to bring everyone together. Countess Mavrodaki offers to umpire – but warns Margo that contests between the two nations are never friendly. Spiro advises Louisa that she has terrible taste in men, while Larry finds that Vasilia wants their relationship to progress faster than expected.

9.00 Grantchester. Sidney joins a travellers' community as he struggles to put his past life in Grantchester behind him, but finds himself accused of murder and in need of Geordie's help.

10.00 ITV News; Weather.

10.20 Peston on Sunday. Political magazine, presented by Robert Peston. Allegra Stratton presents a guide to the latest issues on social media. (R)

11.20 Premiership Rugby Union. Mark Durden-Smith and David Flatman present highlights of the semi-finals.

12.15 Lethal Weapon. (R) **1.00** Jackpot247. **3.00** Motorsport UK.

CHANNEL 4

6.10 Motor Sport: Caterham. **6.40** European Taekwondo Championships. **7.35** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Eat the Week. **1.30** The Simpsons. (R) **2.00 Film:** Dr Dolittle 2. (2001) Comedy sequel, starring Eddie Murphy. **3.50 Film:** Robin Hood. (1973) Disney animation, with the voices of Terry-Thomas and Peter Ustinov. **5.30** George Clarke's Old House, New Home. (R)

6.30 Channel 4 News.

7.00 Flat Pack Mansions. Documentary following people who are building huge luxury houses out of prefabricated materials on a tight schedule, with the homes designed to be environmentally efficient. Pizza restaurant entrepreneurs Richard and Nikki Cooper plan to build a 5000-square foot home in just four days, David and Lesley Lennox rush to complete their build before their daughter's wedding, and Paul Cook is constructing his dream house on a cliff top.

8.00 Cabins in the Wild with Dick Strawbridge. New series. Eight teams transform cabins across Wales into luxury tourist accommodation, which together will form a pop-up hotel that can be moved around the country.

9.00 The Trial: A Murder in the Family. New series. Drama-documentary in which a fictional murder case is tried in a real court, with Michael Gould playing the defendant in front of a real judge, jury and QCs. Continues tomorrow.

10.05 Gogglebox. Capturing the households' instant reactions to what they are watching on TV from the comfort of their own sofas. (R)

11.00 Film: Bad Teacher. (2011) A cynical, hard-drinking teacher hopes to seduce a wealthy substitute, making an enemy of a squeaky-clean colleague in the process. Comedy, with Cameron Diaz and Justin Timberlake.

12.50 Millionaires' Mansions: Designing Britain's Most Exclusive Homes. (R) **1.45** The Last Leg. (R) **2.40** Location, Location, Location. (R) **3.35** Selling Houses with Amanda Lamb. **4.30** Jamie's Comfort Food Bites. (R) **4.40** KOTV Boxing Weekly. **5.05** Gillette World Sport. **5.35** Mobil 1 The Grid. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Milkshake! Monkey. **6.05** Mr Men. **6.15** Peppa Pig. (R) **6.20** Peppa Pig. (R) **6.25** Wissper. (R) **6.35** Paw Patrol. (R) **6.45** Bob the Builder. (R) **7.00** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.10** Olly the Little White Van. (R) **7.15** Olly the Little White Van. (R) **7.20** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.35** Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) **8.00** Noddy: Toyland Detective. (R) **8.15** Wissper. (R) **8.30** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **8.45** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.05** Little Princess. (R) **9.25** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.30** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.40** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.55** The Fairly OddParents. (R) **10.30** Dogs Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R) **10.55** Police Interceptors. (R) **11.55** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.55 Film:** Fletch Lives. (1989) **2.45 Film:** Willow. (1988) Fantasy adventure, starring Warwick Davis. **5.10 Film:** Labyrinth. (1986) Fantasy adventure, starring Jennifer Connelly and David Bowie.

7.05 Film: Walking on Sunshine. (2014) Premiere. A woman has a whirlwind romance in Italy and decides to get married. Her sister flies out to attend the wedding, but is shocked to discover that the groom is the man she loved and lost on a previous holiday. Musical comedy featuring a soundtrack of 1980s pop songs, starring Hannah Arterton and Greg Wise.

8.55 5 News Weekend.

9.00 Greatest 80s Movies. Ronni Ancona narrates a countdown of viewers' favourite films from the decade, including ET, Top Gun, Ghostbusters, Beverly Hills Cop and Ferris Bueller's Day Off. Christopher Lloyd chats about playing Doc Brown in the Back to the Future franchise, Breakfast Club star Judd Nelson reveals what life was really like in the Brat Pack and Corey Feldman recalls the first time he saw the pirate ship on the set of The Goonies. Zach Galligan shares the secrets of how the mogwai were brought to life in Gremlins and Paul Hogan talks about the success of Crocodile Dundee. (R)

11.55 Film: Highlander. (1986) Immortal warriors must fight each other in duels to the death through the centuries, until only one survives. Fantasy action adventure, with Christopher Lambert and Sean Connery.

2.00 SuperCasino. **3.10** Top 20 Funniest. (R) **4.00** Criminals: Caught on Camera. (R) **4.50** House Doctor. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four

7.00 The Birth of British Music **8.00** Timeshift: The Last Days of Steam **9.00** Tutankhamun: The Truth Uncovered **10.00** Arena: American Epic **11.00** Country at the BBC **12.00** The Secret Horse: Quest for the True Appaloosa **1.00** Burma, My Father and the Forgotten Army **2.00** Horizon: Man on Mars – Mission to the Red Planet **3.00** Tutankhamun: The Truth Uncovered **4.00** Close

ITV2

11.45 Take Me Out **1.00 Film:** A Cinderella Story (2004) **2.00** FYI Daily **2.05 Film:** A Cinderella Story (2004) **3.05 Film:** Space Chimps (2008) **4.05** FYI Daily **4.10 Film:** Space Chimps (2008) **4.40** Britain's Got Talent **5.55** Britain's Got More Talent **6.55 Film:** Red Riding Hood (2011) **7.55** FYI Daily **8.00 Film:** Red Riding Hood (2011) **9.00** Take Me Out – The Gossip **10.00** Family Guy **11.30** American Dad! **12.25** The Cleveland Show **1.25** Through the Keyhole **2.15** Alesha Dixon: The Hot Desk **2.25** Teleshopping **5.55** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3

11.50 Film: Columbo: The Greenhouse Jungle (1972) **1.20** A Touch of Frost **3.40** Foyle's War **5.55** Midsomer Murders **8.00** Royal Stories **9.00** The Queen's Garden **10.00** Law & Order: UK **12.05** Wire in the Blood **3.20** May the Best House Win **5.05** In Loving Memory

ITV4

11.15 Live British Touring Car Championship. **6.00** Storage Wars **6.55** Fishing Impossible **8.00** Premiership Rugby Union **9.00** Heroes and Villains: Caught on Camera **10.00 Film:** Driven to Kill (2009) **11.00** FYI Daily **11.05 Film:** Driven to Kill (2009) **12.05** River Monsters **1.05** Minder **2.05** Fifth Gear **3.00** Teleshopping

E4

11.35 The Goldbergs **1.30** Black-ish **2.00** Baby Daddy **2.30** Kevin Can Wait **3.00** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **3.25** The Big Bang Theory **6.45 Film:** The Three Musketeers (2011) **9.00** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **10.00** Rude Tube **11.00** 8 Out of 10 Cats **11.50** Tattoo Fixers on Holiday **2.00** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **2.45** Rude Tube **3.10** New Girl **3.30** Hollyoaks

Film4

11.00 Guadalcanal Diary (1943) **1.00** Diary of a Wimpy Kid (2010) **2.50** Time Bandits (1981) **5.05** Johnny English (2003) **6.45** Shallow Hal (2001) **9.00** The Gunman (2015) **11.15** Rush (2013) **1.35** Love & Other Drugs (2010) **3.50** Close

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PICK OF THE WEEK

FILM CHOICES

MONDAY
Django Unchained, Channel 5, 10pm
A slave named Django is tracked down by eccentric German bounty hunter Dr King Schultz, who offers him his freedom in exchange for help bringing three criminals to justice. The unlikely allies continue their partnership after the job is done, and fight to rescue Django's wife from a sadistic plantation owner. Quentin Tarantino's Oscar-winning Western, starring Jamie Foxx and Christoph Waltz. (2012)

TUESDAY
Perfect Seduction, Channel 5, 3.15pm
Despite having left his girlfriend behind in New York City for a promotion in Portland, Brandon hopes that they can make things work long-distance. But his new co-worker Simone has other ideas and she impersonates both Brandon and his absent girlfriend in order to end their relationship. Thriller, starring Adrienne Frantz, Jon Cor and Ashley Leggat. (2015)

Django Unchained, Monday, Channel 5, 10pm

WEDNESDAY
Whiteout, Channel 4, 1.50am
A troubled US marshal stationed in Antarctica investigates the first-ever murder committed on the continent. As she pursues the killer across the ice, she uncovers the dark secret behind a Soviet plane crash 50 years earlier – but the harsh conditions could kill her before the murderer does. Thriller, starring Kate Beckinsale. (2009)

THURSDAY
Guilty at 17, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A teenager believes her friend when she lies about being sexually harassed by a teacher, and falsely claims to have witnessed an incident. When the accused teacher commits suicide, she is consumed with guilt and begins to suspect she has been deceived. Crime drama, starring Erin Sanders. (2014)

FRIDAY
She's Out of My League, BBC1, 11.25pm
Distinctly average Kirk cannot believe his luck when he lands a date with the beautiful Molly. The pair embark on a relationship but Kirk's insecurities lead him to question whether they belong together. Romantic comedy, starring Jay Baruchel. (2010)

Series hopes that it won't prove to be a tough sell

If you haven't seen the trailers for this new sitcom starring former Inbetweeners James Buckley and Joe Thomas, it may come as a surprise to learn that the 'white gold' of the title refers to the PVC on double-glazed windows. But it's an idea that the show's creator, writer and director Damon Beesley is very familiar with.

Beesley, who along with Ian Morris came up with The Inbetweeners, explains: "White Gold has lived in my head for thirty years. Ever since I heard my father describe the UPVC plastic which framed the double-glazed windows he sold as being 'as valuable, gram for gram as gold' I was captivated.

"My dad was a double-glazing salesman in the early days of the industry, before double glazing salesman became the national pariahs that we all know and loathe. But back then, in the early 80s, white plastic windows were a status symbol of upward mobility."

And it's that era that provides the backdrop for this show, as it takes us back to the Essex of 1983. Beesley sets the scene, saying: "While the miners' strikes, picket-line riots and police brutality defined the story of the working classes across the land, in the South East business was booming. Under Thatcher's Tory government, the national stock of council housing was effectively put up for sale with the introduction of the right to buy scheme.

"And so a revolution of homeownership was born, and in this brave new world of individualism there was no better way to show the neighbours that you owned the house you lived in than getting shiny new double glazed windows fitted."

Of course, he also had a personal connection to this world. "As a kid, I remember visiting the showrooms that my dad worked in and being fascinated by the charismatic, brash and well-groomed young men that sat around all day laughing, smoking Rothman's cigarettes, drinking tea, and occasionally selling to customers.

"As a grown-up writer, there was something about these characters that stuck with me. These working-class men, with the gift of the gab and a hunger to succeed felt like a great way into the early 80s that maybe hadn't been explored before."

In White Gold, we're introduced to Vincent Swan (Ed Westwick), double glazing salesman extraordinaire. He's handsome, confident and prepared to do whatever it takes to get a sale.

His team at Cachet Windows also includes Fitzpatrick (Buckley), who can charm people out of their life savings, and Lavender (Thomas), whose politeness and moral compass tend to be a hindrance when it comes to securing a sale.

In the first episode, Fitzpatrick becomes the subject of a bet as he tries to pull the ultimate salesman's con – selling new windows to someone who's recently shelled out for the exact same product. Meanwhile, Vincent has his own challenge to deal with as he attempts to convince an old colleague to join him in the double-glazing business.

Ed Westwick stars in White Gold, Wednesday, BBC2, 10pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY
Prince Philip: 70 Years of Service
ITV, 9pm
It was recently announced that Prince Philip is to step down from public duties – and given that he's 95, it would be hard to grudge him his retirement. In this documentary, Alan Titchmarsh looks back at the Duke of Edinburgh's 70 years in the spotlight, which saw him go from a naval officer to the longest-serving royal consort in British history. Titchmarsh has interviewed Prince Philip on several occasions, and he shares his insights into the man credited with helping to modernise the royal family. He also hears from some of those closest to him and gets a chance to see the Duke ëoff-duty' at the recent Royal Windsor Horse Show, and the programme asks what his decision will mean for the monarchy.

TUESDAY
Broken
BBC1, 9pm
Sean Bean has been fortunate to work with screenwriter Jimmy McGovern already on drama anthology Accused, which scored him a BAFTA nomination. And the pair have joined forces again for this new landmark drama, which follows Fr Michael Kerrigan (Bean), the modern, maverick and reassuringly flawed parish priest in an impoverished working-class community. Over six episodes, we will see Fr Kerrigan trying to make a difference in his parishioners' lives, while struggling coming to terms with his own troubled past and testing vocation. Tonight, Fr Michael meets Christina Fitzsimmons (Anna Friel), a mother of three who works at the local betting shop. When her attendance in Church sparks an unfortunate chain of events, she is left with no way to feed her children and comes up with a desperate plan. Will she go through with it, or can Fr Michael offer the family a lifeline?

WEDNESDAY
The Met: Policing London
BBC1, 9pm
New series. Documentary following officers from Britain's biggest and busiest police force as they deal with life, death, crime and its victims across London. In the first episode, police constables Laura Walker and Oz Bhatti patrol the streets of Westminster, but are later called upon as back up when an impromptu summer party in Hyde Park descends into chaos. Meanwhile in Stratford, East London, Sergeant Vicky Kneale responds to concerns from local residents about the borough's prostitution problem.

THURSDAY
Paula
BBC2, 9pm
According to the old proverb, revenge is a dish best served cold. Try telling that to the title character of this new, three-part drama, which is the first TV project for acclaimed Olivier and Tony award-winning playwright Conor McPherson. There is nothing cold here – calculating, yes, but it's all done with fire and passion. Paula is a Dublin-based science teacher. She's respected by her colleagues and pupils, but her life is about to spiral dangerously out of control when she meets James, a decidedly dodgy wheeler dealer. He arrives at her home to sort out a rat infestation, but stays for a torrid one-night stand. Paula is then drawn into his murky world, and suddenly, she can't escape from him – and his actions have an impact on her job, family and friends. But how far will she go to get James out of her life?

Paula, Thursday, BBC2, 9pm

FRIDAY
Count Arthur Strong
BBC1, 8.30pm
This sitcom only seems to crop up at two yearly intervals – the previous series were broadcast in 2013 and 2015 – so it's easy for viewers to forget just how entertaining Steve Delaney's alter ego can be. Still, last week's opening episode served as a welcome reminder of the out-of-work actor and showbiz legend (in his own mind least) Count Arthur Strong's charms, and there are more laughs this week as John the Watch's former criminal associates start taking an interest in Bulent's café. But which of the breakfast options will they prefer?

Lethal Weapon
ITV, 9pm
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No.430

Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.

5	10	22	19	20	5	■	12	3	9	10	19	17
■	22	■	10	■	20	■	19	■	16	■	■	20
■	19	■	17	9	20	5	11	16	14	3	4	25
2	10	22	15	■	7	■	16	■	24	■	■	25
■	23	■	16	■	4	■	25	■	16	■	■	20
■	20	24	17	4	25	8	4	■	23	6	20	5
10	■	20	■	■	■	20	■	■	■	20	■	17
22	4	26	21	■	17	5	12	6	6	20	5	■
13	■	■	20	■	5	■	15	■	4	■	10	■
16	■	■	25	■	12	■	25	■	17	4	6	7
4	26	21	25 R	12	22	4	20	16	17	■	6	■
17	■	■	10 I	■	1	■	17	■	4	■	20	■
21	10	19	19	6	18	■	17	9	25	4	5	19

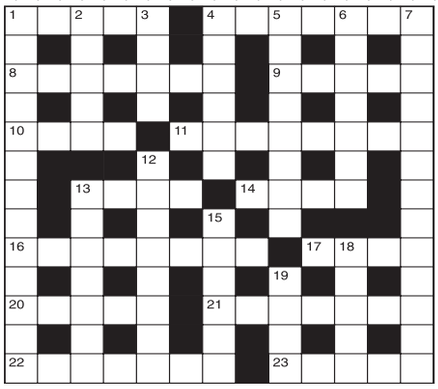
1	14
2	15
3	16
4	17
5	18
6	19
7	20
8	21
9	22
10 I	23
11	24
12	25 R
13	26

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1 Z	2 W	3 L	4 Q	5 O	6 D	7 K	8 V	9 M	10 G	11 C	12 P	13 T
14 U	15 N	16 S	17 J	18 X	19 B	20 Y	21 H	22 R	23 A	24 E	25 I	26 F

Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.



Cryptic Clues:

Across

1. Booth Farm accommodation (5)
4. Where clinkers are found, path is diverted to the south (3,4)
8. Its name is changed by the occupants (7)
9. The rubbish that people are willing to swallow! (5)
10. A very small coin for a tiny child (4)
11. See 13 down
13. Unusually old, turnip-headed numskull (4)
14. See 23 Across
16. Made a signal - gets rude, maybe (8)
17. Not being used as an image, we hear (4)
20. Lawn is attractive when put back (5)
21 & 5 Dn Those who take a cold bath don't find themselves in trouble (3,4,3,5)
22. Group not charged - allowed to leave (3,4)
23 & 14Ac. Much comes from splendid distribution of cards (5,4)

Down

1. They record earth-shaking events (13)
2. Let in to make a confession (5)
3. This fills the cracks in the instrument (4)
4. Some of the plans were to hide the solution (6)
5. See 21 Across
6. Letter of introduction (7)
7. In the main it's back to front (5-8)
12. Fish to be all at sea! (8)
13 & 11Ac. Far-flung tale from remote connection (7,8)
15. Animal used in hunting the first of the buzzards, a bird of prey (6)
18. Lacking smartness - needs to be sorted out (5)
19. Kind of party forming part of the fiesta, gentlemen (4)

Quick Clues:

Across

1. Stage furnishings (5)
4. Artist (7)
8. Praise insincerely (7)
9. Bewitch (5)
10. Large jug (4)
11. Rider (8)
13. Merit (4)
14. Impure (4)
16. Hand over (8)
17. Joy (4)
20. Semi-precious stone (5)
21. Colossal (7)
22. Builder (7)
23. Squeeze (5)

Down

1. Discriminate (13)
2. Pursue (5)
3. Roster (4)
4. Rector (6)
5. Cut (8)
6. Obstruct (7)
7. Recollections (13)
12. Expectation (8)
13. Issue (7)
15. Epistle (6)
18. Spear (5)
19. Halt (4)

Sudoku

5	9	7	8					1
	1	3		4	9			
	8					9		
		1			3			7
			2		6			
8			1	5		3	9	
		8					4	
	7		5			6	8	
4					8	1	2	9

Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

2	3	1	6	8	7	4	9	5
4	6	9	2	1	5	8	7	3
8	5	7	4	9	3	1	2	6
5	1	2	9	3	8	7	6	4
9	4	3	1	7	6	5	8	2
7	8	6	5	4	2	9	3	1
3	2	8	7	5	1	6	4	9
1	7	4	3	6	9	2	5	8
6	9	5	8	2	4	3	1	7

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
CRYPTIC - Across: 3 Addresses; 8 Tour; 9 Deduction; 10 Rubber; 11 Metre; 14 Loose; 15 Ever; 16 Right; 18 Nuns; 20 Rules; 21 Doubt; 24 Martin; 25 Defaulted; 26 Toil; 27 Otherwise. Down: 1 Startling; 2 Dumbfound; 4 Deer; 5 Route; 6 Satire; 7 Eros; 9 Defer; 11 Might; 12 Evolution; 13 Presently; 17 Tread; 19 Solace; 22 Below; 23 Left; 24 Mess.
QUICK - Across: 3 Spectator; 8 Norm; 9 Accoutred; 10 Intact; 11 Penal; 14 Niche; 15 Lame; 16 Deter; 18 Thor; 20 Eager; 21 Reach; 24 Decant; 25 Bilateral; 26 Slur; 27 Blandness. Down: 1 Indignity; 2 Protector; 4 Pact; 5 Close; 6 Astral; 7 Over; 9 Acted; 11 Patch; 12 Laughable; 13 Territory; 17 Repel; 19 Remain; 22 Clean; 23 Bill; 24 Dais.

Quiz

1. What do we call the scavenger bird Corvus corax?
2. What is the capital of Australia's Northern Territory?
3. What is the main constituent of the alloy pewter?
4. Which plant is the Scottish national symbol?
5. What is the capital of Chechnya?
6. What is traditionally the official residence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer?
7. What was boxer Joe Louis's nickname?
8. Which cotton fabric is named after the Iraqi city Mosul?
9. What is the name of the Atlantic-Pacific sea route around the north of Canada?
10. Which Broadway award is named after actress and producer Antoinette Perry?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Magnetic field; 2 Marcel Marceau; 3 Guernsey; 4 Green Monkey Disease; 5 A loofah; 6 Christian Scientists; 7 Egypt; 8 Joan Collins; 9 Gasoline; 10 Euripides.

Niner: UPHOLSTER

Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

7629183	gives a tube station,
457453	gives a second tube station,
89154	gives a commuter town.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

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Zagreb – Croatia's charming capital

ZAGREB is one of Europe's youngest capital cities, as the cultural and administrative hub for Croatia, which finally gained independence in 1991 after the collapse of Communist Yugoslavia.

Located between the River Sava and the slopes of Medvednica Mountain and known as 'Little Vienna', the city's main public buildings, shopping arcades, elegant apartments and picture perfect parks were built after an earthquake in 1880. They were constructed in the opulent style befitting one of the major cities of the Austro-Hungarian empire.

The city is festooned with statuary. Even the most humble facade is not complete without some caryatid or god-like adornment watching over the streets below. In modern folklore it is said that these guardians of the urban environment sometimes climb down for a stroll in the wee hours. It's a pity they couldn't catch the graffiti artists whose tags are everywhere, a scourge that affects many European cities.

Modern office towers now compete in size with the suburban high-rise blocks thrown up to house workers during the boom years of Marshall Tito's Yugoslavia. But the twin towers of the city's neo-Gothic cathedral, also constructed after the earthquake, still dwarf all other contenders as Zagreb's tallest building.

The city is built on two hills, the Gradec and Kaptol. The former has St Mark's Church with its colourful tiled roof showing coats of arms for Croatia's regions (including the red and white checks familiar from the national football team shirt). It is flanked by the president's palace and the Croatian Parliament. It is reached by a funicular cliff railway, or steep steps or a road that climbs through the Stone Gate, a medieval gateway/chapel containing an icon of the Virgin Mary and baby Jesus that is venerated by devout Catholics. Kaptol has the Cathedral and vibrant daily Dolac Market.

St Mark's Church and its colourful tiled roof

The opulent interior of Zagreb's National Theatre

Between the hills is Tkalciceva, a long street lined by restaurants and bars. Try Strukli, a savoury or sweet Zagreb dish that is somewhere between lasagne and bread and butter pudding, or a glass of the outstanding local beer Pivovara Medvedgrad's Fakin IPA.

Croatia may be a new state but the Croatian identity and language goes back centuries. The strong pride in the achievements of this small nation perhaps explain the incredible plethora of museums and art galleries.

With most visitors to Croatia heading for the coast, and the city's own population numbering well under a million, you are not going to be swamped by crowds.

Highlights include: The Museum of Broken Relationships; donated items, from an axe used to smash up a cheating girlfriend's furniture to a mother's suicide note, illustrate touching stories (in English) collected from around the world. This poignant exhibition will not leave you unmoved.

Mimara; a vast and highly varied collection of art and valuable objects collected by Wiltrud and Ante Topić Mimara and housed in a palatial former school.

Museum of Arts and Crafts; the religious icons and wooden statues are in themselves worth the visit, but there is much, much more.

Croatian Museum of Naive Art; colourful folk art meets Balkan surrealism.

Zagreb can easily be explored on foot, if footsore, hop onto a tram, tickets from the many Tisak kiosks. Save some kuna with a 24 or 72-hour Zagreb card which offers use of the ZET city transportation (trams, buses, funicular), admission to four museum/galleries and the zoo, plus discounts for other attractions.

Leon Burakowski

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CHRONICLE

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PROPERTY

YOUR WEEKLY GUIDE TO HOME BUYING AND LETTING

Two-bedroomed semi boasts host of period features

Being recently refurbished and beautifully presented, 37 Lake Street, Lower Gornal, is a two-double-bedroomed semi-detached house with period features.

A stunning property, it is for sale through Trinity Property at £139,950 with no chain.

With an upstairs bathroom and a cellar, the rest of its accommodation briefly comprises two double bedrooms, two reception rooms – being a lounge and dining room and a kitchen diner and a private rear garden.

There is also potential to extend into the loft, subject to planning permission.

It is located near good schools and is within walking distance of amenities in Gornal Wood village. This property has much to offer.

A spokesman for the selling agent said: "This is not your average two-bedroom house and it must be viewed. We are pleased to offer this stunning two-bedroomed family-sized house in a popular area of Lower Gornal.

"Recently refurbished to an exceptionally high standard, this is a truly immaculate semi-detached home."

This property has period features throughout with high ceilings, fireplaces, picture rails and spacious rooms.

The company spokesman added: "Downstairs there are two large reception rooms and a kitchen/diner plus a cellar. On the first floor there are two double bedrooms, of which the master is particularly generous in size.

"The family bathroom is a decadent room with roll-top bath, separate corner shower and WC. The private stepped rear garden has a lawned area and multiple patio areas."

Viewings are being strongly urged by the selling agents, and are strictly through them. A spokesman said: "Trinity Property bring a fresh, friendly and honest approach to selling, buying and letting property within the Dudley and Stourbridge area."

LOWER GORNAL £139,950

TO VIEW THIS PROPERTY

AGENT: Trinity Property
TEL: 01384 213395
EMAIL: dudley@trinityproperty.net

KEY FEATURES

Beautifully presented semi
2 double bedrooms
2 reception rooms
Kitchen/diner
Cellar & upstairs bathroom

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MNA Media

Detached house is in a cul-de-sac location

DUDLEY
£210,000

A three/four bedroomed detached house in a cul-de-sac location in Compton Drive, Oakham, Dudley, is for sale through Trinity Property at £210,000 with no chain.

Having a drive to the front with a single garage, it has an entrance hall with a downstairs WC and stairs to the first floor off, doors to a large lounge with a dining area, a fitted breakfast kitchen with a serving hatch, a dining room/bedroom four and a utility to the side with front and rear access.

On the first floor, there are three good-sized bedrooms (two doubles and a single) and a modern bathroom/WC with a shower over the bath. Outside there is a large patio area with side access to the garage and steps down to a large lawned area.

Call Trinity Property on 01384 213395.

Imposing family home with six bedrooms is new to market

TIVIDALE
£390,000 <<<

Imposing and handsome, this attractively presented and substantial six-bedroomed detached residence in Oakham Road Oakham, Tividale, has just joined the property market.

It is for sale through Taylors at £390,000 with no chain.

It has a spacious entrance hall, a lovely sitting room, a dining room with a feature fireplace, a delightful conservatory addition, a splendid gloss kitchen with integrated units and a dining area, a guest cloakroom/WC, six first floor bedrooms, two modern well-appointed bathrooms.

There is a substantial driveway for numerous vehicles, a garage and an outstanding rear garden with paved area for alfresco dining, lawned area beyond and all bordered by established planting, trees and shrubbery.

Call 01902 880888.

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Extended four-bedroomed detached in cul-de-sac

Being extended, this four-bedroomed detached property in Silverstone Close, Bentley, lies in a cul-de-sac location.

It is for sale through L&S Prestige Estates at £189,995.

Its accommodation briefly comprises an entrance hall, lounge, dining room, fitted kitchen, rear sitting room, guest WC, utility area and ground floor shower room.

BENTLEY
£189,995

To the first floor are four bedrooms and a family bathroom. The property also has double glazing and gas central heating throughout.

Outside there is driveway parking and a garden area to the fore with an enclosed garden to the rear.

The property is superbly situated for easy access to a wide range of local amenities, a choice of popular local schools and excellent transport links. It is in need of some cosmetic improvements in parts but has excellent potential for comfortable family living given the location and size of the accommodation on offer.

Contact L&S Prestige on 01902 606 595 or visit www.prestige-estatesuk.com

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SEDGLEY, Sunningdale Road, Northway

ENVIABLY SITUATED with magnificent PANORAMIC DISTANT VIEWS a spacious EXTENDED & comprehensively refurbished/upgraded detached upon corner plot abutting onto fields comprising; hall, cloakroom, L shape 19'8 through living/dining room with double doors through to CONSERVATORY, extended/recently refitted 18'10" x 16'4" dining kitchen, den/ snug off and utility room. THREE DOUBLE BEDROOMS, bathroom, extensive grounds. EPC: D SEDGLEY.

New price — WAS £300,000 ... NOW £290,000

LOWER GORNAL, The Straits

ENLARGED, gas centrally heated, double glazed detached two/three bedroom within walking distance of so many amenities comprising; porch, hall, principal bedroom with wardrobes, study (occasional third bedroom), refitted dining kitchen with 'high gloss white' finish units, utility room, bathroom, second bedroom, inner vestibule, walk in dressing room with a fine range of first quality units, shower/wet room, LARGE GARAGE, neat garden. EPC:E. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £245,000

WOLVERHAMPTON, Camberley Crescent, Ettingshall Park

NO UPWARD CHAIN, Situated in the popular area of Ettingshall Park, Wolverhampton, this family home offers great potential. With porch, hallway, this property also boasts central heating, double glazing, living room, dining room, fitted-kitchen, THREE/ FOUR bedrooms, roof space (with windows), bathroom, integral garage,rear garden, drive and garden to front, EPC:E SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £219,950

New

KINGSWINFORD, Fairview Crescent

A EXPENSIVELY IMPROVED and EXTENDED SEMI DETACHED HOME which enjoys a superb position offering a BEAUTIFULLY RE-APPOINTED layout which includes a LARGE CONSERVATORY and THREE LARGE BEDROOMS. DRIVE/PARKING, SIDE CARPORT, GARAGE and a good sized rear garden. EPC E

No upward chain — £209,950

New

KINGSWINFORD, Standhills Road

A IMPRESSIVE DETACHED BUNGALOW close to amenities, offering a GENEROUS layout which is BEAUTIFULLY APPOINTED with a Large 20ft plus Lounge/ Diner, Breakfast Kitchen, TWO BEDROOMS and a WET ROOM. With DRIVEWAY, SIDE STORE and a large rear garden. EPC D. NO UPWARD CHAIN

Offers in the Region Of £209,950

lOWER GORNAL , Thornleigh

An EXTENDED REMARKABLY SPACIOUS gas centrally heated UPVC double glazed semi detached. Flexible room arrangements include entrance porch, reception hall, elegant lounge, dining room (with double doors out to garden), 'wet room', store, refitted kitchen with a fine range of units, rear lobby. FOUR BEDROOMS, reappointed bathroom, shortened garage, extensive black paved parking and landscaped low maintenance rear garden with distant views. EPC Rating TBC. SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £200,000

GORNAL WOOD, Eaton Crescent

Situated on a fantastic corner position in the extremely popular GORNAL WOOD area of Dudley this DETACHED bungalow offers so much. With entrance hallway and garage, this DETACHED BUNGALOW also benefits from L-shaped open lounge-diner, kitchen, bathroom, TWO BEDROOMS central heating, driveway and enveloped by low-maintenance gardens all around the property. NO UPWARD CHAIN. EPC Rating D. SEDGLEY

Was £209,950...NOW £200,000

COSELEY, Turls Hill Road

A STUNNINGLY presented traditional end of terrace located in extremely sought after neighbourhood within walking distance of OPEN FIELDS Retaining many original features, this tremendous gas centrally heated double glazed family home comprises elegant living room, open-plan dining room and attractive fitted kitchen, superb bathroom, THREE BEDROOMS, enclosed rear garden with 23 foot workshop; parking to front. VIEWING IS ESSENTIAL. EPC Rating TBC. SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £189,950

SEDGLEY, Northway

An attractive, ENLARGED gas centrally heated & uPVC double glazed detached with good DISTANT VIEWS. Accommodation provides; entrance porch, traditional hall, elegant lounge, dining room, brick/uPVC double glazed CONSERVATORY, upgraded kitchen with beech effect units and utility room beyond. Three bedrooms, reappointed bathroom with a white suite. Large garage, professionally landscaped gardens to front & rear. EPC Rating E. SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £185,000

New

COSELEY, Bramford , Cedar Avenue

SIGNIFICANTLY EXTENDED - gas centrally heated UPVC double glazed semi-detached presented in exemplary order throughout comprising enlarged entrance porch, reception hall, store, 25ft through lounge/dining room, extended breakfast kitchen, rear lobby/utility room, 'office'; three bedrooms (one with wardrobes), bathroom with white contemporary styled suite. Large Garage, rear garden, block paved parking to front. EPC Rating TBC. SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £180,000

LOWER GORNAL, Wallows Wood

Tremendously modernised, gas centrally heated, double glazed semi detached that has been comprehensively modernised in recent years at head of cul-de-sac with porch, hall, and "open plan" accommodation incorporating lounge section (with bay), dining room section (with French doors out to garden), and a refitted kitchen section. Three bedrooms, bathroom. parking, "sun trap" side/rear garden. EPC:D SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £175,000

COSELEY , Denise Drive

ENLARGED & IMPROVED, detached family home in exemplary order throughout. Stunning accommodation includes; porch, reception hall, reappointed cloaks, upgraded kitchen, transverse living room, separate dining room, and uPVC double glazed CONSERVATORY beyond. Three generous bedrooms, third bedroom with loft ladder up to boarded roof space with sky lights. Reappointed bathroom., Garage, landscaped gardens. EPC: TBA SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £168,995

New

UPPER GORNAL , Windmill Street

EXCEPTIONALLY STYLISH and meticulously maintained freehold gas centrally heated UPVC double glazed semi-detached in cul-de-sac. In superb order throughout the accommodation provides hallway, lounge, upgraded breakfast kitchen, store; three bedrooms (one with wardrobes), bathroom. Garage space, delightful level sheltered rear garden. EPC Rating TBC. SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £150,000

New

LANESFIELD , Ward Grove

ABSOLUTLY TRANSFORMED! - Fully modernised freehold gas centrally heated (combi boiler) UPVC double glazed semi-detached bungalow. Room arrangements have been reconfigured to provide a spacious kitchen, lounge with bay, walk in store, two bedrooms (one with double French doors out to the garden), reappointed shower room. Herringbone pattern block paved foregarden given ample space for parking and a sheltered rear garden. EPC Rating TBC. SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £139,950

DUDLEY, Langstone Road, Russells Hall

A deceptively spacious semi-detached property located on the popular Russells Hall estate, this good-sized family home has so much to offer. Benefiting from entrance porch, central heating and double glazing, this EXTENDED house also boasts; open-plan lounge-diner, utility, fitted breakfast-kitchen, ground-floor wet room, THREE BEDROOMS, attractive fitted bathroom, enclosed rear-garden, garage and parking to front. VIEWING RECOMMENDED. EPC B. SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £134,950

New

DUDLEY , Dibdale Road

STUNNING QUALITY! Comprehensively modernised gas centrally heated UPVC double glazed intermediate 'starter home' of character. Dining room, entrance vestibule, store, sitting room (with wood burner stove), refitted kitchen. Two double bedrooms, store, reappointed bathroom with white suite, delightful sheltered landscaped rear garden. EPC Rating TBC. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £110,000

DUDLEY, Corser Street

NO UPWARD CHAIN. Within walking distance of Milking Bank, and all associated amenities, a gas centrally heated (recent combi boiler), uPVC double glazed THREE BEDROOM intermediate 'starter home' in popular district briefly comprising; entrance porch, reception hall, lounge with bay, transverse dining kitchen with bay. Three bedrooms, bathroom with white suite, Parking to front (for one car), and good size sheltered rear garden. EPC: D SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £110,000

SEDGLEY, Lime Road

A conscientiously maintained majority gas centrally heated (recent combi boiler) and UPVC double glazed intermediate 'starter home' with further potential. Set in a popular/convenient district the accommodation includes entrance porch, reception hall, store, lounge, kitchen, dining room, THREE BEDROOMS, bathroom, through lobby, outer porch, two stores, WC, off road parking, garden. EPC Rating D. SEDGLEY.

Offers in the region of £107,950

Mortgage price battle is good news for buyers

A new mortgage war has broken out. Vicky Shaw discusses how homeowners and new buyers can make the most of it.

A new mortgage war has erupted in recent weeks.

Nationwide Building Society, Santander, HSBC, Halifax, Yorkshire Building Society and Tesco Bank are among a wave of lenders to have revamped their ranges.

Some lenders are offering their lowest rates ever in the battle to offer appealing deals.

● So what's behind the new mortgage price war? David Hollingworth, a mortgage expert at L&C Mortgages, says: "Lenders are scrapping it out to attract business, whether it's from those buying their first home, moving house or looking to switch to a better deal.

"More lenders fighting for business means that they need to stand out from the crowd and truly differentiate themselves.

"This, coupled with some easing in cost of funds, is forcing lenders to offer rates that demand attention. As a result, lenders are squeezing whatever they can out of their deals and offering more and more eye-catching rates."

● Will the mortgage price war continue?

Hollingworth says there's nothing to suggest an end in sight to the "very, very healthy" competition that's being seen on the market. By offering great rates, smaller lenders are forcing bigger lenders to spruce up their ranges to maintain their market position, he adds.

● Will rates get any lower? Rachel Springall, a finance expert at Moneyfacts.co.uk, believes some rates could be shaved lower still by lenders if they need to meet specific targets to draw in new customers.

● How can homeowners make the most of what's on offer and choose the right deal? Springall says concentrating on the mortgage rate alone may not be the wisest way to navigate the mortgage maze. "Interest rates are important but so is the incentive package and any fees that are chargeable," she says.

"Some of the lowest-rate deals carry the highest product fees and have little to no incentives, but other deals with slightly higher rates could be fee-free, with a free valuation, and offer free legal fees, which can be much more cost-effective.

"It's worth remembering that this is just the cost of the mortgage itself; if moving, there will be other costs to pay, such as removal costs."

Some borrowers may want to lock into fixed-rate mortgage deals to give themselves certainty while others may want more flexibility.

Low mortgage rates also give borrowers who can afford it the opportunity to make overpayments, and perhaps clear their mortgages earlier, Springall adds.

● Bank of mum and dad continues to play a vital role. Despite the cheaper mortgage rates on offer, new research shows the bank of mum and dad continues to play a vital role in giving a helping hand on to the property ladder. It is predicted the bank of mum and dad will be involved in 26% of all property transactions in the UK market this year.

A lack of choice blamed as agents report dip in house sales

A lack of choice for buyers is hampering the UK housing market with the latest analysis showing that sales are falling and interest is flat.

Overall new instructions continue to drop with the lack of supply, possibly made worse by the forthcoming general election, a key issue for the housing market, according to the April survey report from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS).

It says that anecdotal evidence cites a lack of choice, uncertainty due to the calling of an early election and the ramifications of stamp duty changes as factors hampering activity and new instructions have now been negative fourteen months in a row at the national level.

This means that the number of properties on estate agents books are hovering close to record lows as 15 per cent more respondents saw new instructions drop in April while new buyer enquiries were unchanged nationally having failed to see any meaningful growth since November 2016.

Stagnant

During April, a net balance of four per cent of respondents saw a fall in new buyer enquiries and alongside stagnant buyer demand, respondents reported agreed sales were beginning to slip slightly following a number of months of flat transactions. Some nine per cent more respondents saw a drop in sales over the month which is the weakest reading since the aftermath of the European Union referendum almost a year ago.

Looking ahead, the flat picture for sales at the national level is expected to continue over the next three months as three per cent more respondents expect to see a rise in sales over the time period. Expectations have moderated in virtually all areas of the UK when compared to the March survey.

However, the 12-month outlook is more optimistic with 31 per cent more respondents anticipating a pick-up in sales over the year ahead at the national level and despite the subdued backdrop, 22 per cent more respondents saw prices rising in April, unchanged from March, underpinned by the lack of stock.

The report points out that house prices continue to rise nationally, with the pace of growth steady over the last five months, although there is variation across the UK.

Looking ahead at the national picture for near term price expectations, these have eased slightly with the net balance moderating to four per cent from 11 per cent, suggesting that house price inflation is anticipated to slow in the three months ahead.

Notwithstanding this, the 12-month expectations predict that all parts of the UK will see growth in house prices.

In the lettings market, the quarterly data shows tenant demand rising moderately, although momentum does appear to have faded over the past six months.

At the same time, landlord instructions were relatively flat leading respondents to expect further modest rental growth at the national level.

"Although the picture clearly does vary across the country, the bulk of the feedback we are receiving points to a fairly flat summer for both activity and prices.

"Lack of stock on the market remains a key challenge for the sector with recent and forthcoming tax changes having a material impact on transaction levels, particularly at higher price points.

"Uncertainty relating to the forthcoming general election is also highlighted by some respondents as a reason for inertia," said Simon Rubinsohn, RICS chief economist.

"It is noticeable that the amount of new rental instructions coming through to agents is continuing to edge lower, which is not altogether surprising given the changing landscape for buy to let investors.

"One consequence of this is that rents are expected to continue rising not just in the near term but also further out and at a faster pace than house prices," he added.

Hike in tax burden sees landlords plan to cut spending

As their tax burden increases, over a third of landlords in the UK are looking to cut their annual spending, a move that is described as being a blow to the wider industry.

Such cut-backs will hit the tradesmen and professionals that support the property industry, according to latest research by Kent Reliance, a specialist mortgage lender and part of OneSavings Bank plc.

But it could also hit lettings agents and the top areas where landlords feel they can make savings are agent fees, property maintenance and mortgage costs.

The firm says that landlords currently contribute £15.9 billion per year to the British economy through pre-tax spending on running their portfolios, supporting thousands of jobs and that this has more than doubled from an estimated £7.1 billion in 2007, owing to the rapid growth of the private rented sector and climbing costs per property.

The cost of property upkeep, maintenance, and servicing is the largest outlay at £5.5 billion while landlords spend £2 billion in service charges and ground rent, £963 million on insurance, £904 million on utilities, and a further £1.1 billion on other associated costs of letting a property.

Spending on letting agents' fees totals £4.7 billion each year with £644 million spent on legal and accountancy fees and £218 million on administration costs. Altogether, landlords provide £5.5 billion of revenue for these sectors.

The research also shows that costs per property have increased by a quarter since 2007. Looking at the running costs per individual property, the average landlord now spends £3,632 per year in running

costs, before tax or mortgage interest, a third of rental income. This has jumped by a quarter since the start of 2007, an estimated rise of £714, without factoring in increasing taxes.

Of this, £1,025 is spent on maintenance, repairs and servicing, with £870 spent on letting agent fees per property. A typical landlord spends £374 per property each year in ground rents and service charges. Insurance typically costs £181, and legal and accountancy fees £121, while administrative and license fees add another £41 per year. A further £652 is lost in void periods each year.

Against the backdrop of rising costs, and higher tax bills, landlords are taking action with 36 per cent of landlords, surveyed by BDRC Continental on behalf of Kent Reliance, saying they are already reducing or planning to reduce their spending, while one in five are looking to raise rents. Some 17 per cent of landlords identified property upkeep and maintenance as a target area for cutting costs, while 10 per cent identified letting agent fees and the same number said mortgage costs. Those landlords anticipate they will reduce spending on letting agent fees by 28 per cent, property maintenance and servicing by 21 per cent and mortgage costs by 15 per cent.

The research report suggests that this will impact the industries and jobs that depend on landlords for revenues. Across the private rented sector, total planned cuts would reduce spending by more than £500 million each year.

"Landlords may seem like an easy target for political point scoring, but they play a vital role in the economy. Not only do they house a huge proportion of the country's workforce, bridging the housing demand and supply gap, their spending supports thousands of jobs whether builders, cleaners, lawyers and accountants or letting agents,2 said John Eastgate, sales and marketing director of OneSavings Bank.

"Trying to tackle the housing crisis by targeting landlords with punitive taxes is very simple and politically highly palatable, but has unintended consequences. Either it means less work for all those who support the property industry, or it means tenants will have to foot the bill for the government's tax raid, or both," he pointed out.

"One side-effect of the recent changes, and rising running costs, will be the professionalisation of the sector as amateur and accidental landlords leave the market. There is nothing wrong with having fewer, bigger landlords, but that alone will not help more young people get homes," he added.

Paddleboarding Italian coast in a Kia Picanto!

The new Picanto can cope with the bigger adventures as it does with city life

By James Baggott

It's all too easy to pigeon-hole cars like the Kia Picanto as city centre shopping karts, fit for nothing more than a quick trip to the supermarket.

While it might be true that the Korean car firm's baby has traditionally been bought by grandparents and students, it's an image the brand is desperately hoping it can shed. This is the third generation of Kia's second best-selling UK car and with it comes more aggressive looks, sharper driving style and technology aimed at helping it appeal to a far broader range of buyers.

Kia believes it can convince customers that while it might still be an easy and fun to drive little car, the new Picanto can still cope with the bigger adventures city dwellers might hanker for too. That's why I find myself squeezed into a wet suit, dripping with sea water after a paddle-boarding adventure on the Italian coastline.

To prove just how versatile its new Picanto can be if you want it to, Kia invited us to the Toscana coastline, crammed two blow-up paddleboards, wet suits and a picnic in one and pointed us towards the coast.

Costing from just £9,450, the Picanto now boasts more passenger and luggage space but with no overall increase in size over the previous model. The Koreans have managed that by increasing the wheelbase while at the same time reducing overhangs. That means inside there's a 25 per cent increase in luggage space, topping 255-litres with the rear seats up and 1,010-litres with them down. That extra carrying capacity certainly comes in handy. The two giant inflatable paddleboards

You'd be surprised at what you can pack in a Picanto

are easily swallowed in the boot, while overnight bags for two and accessories find a home too. In fact, it's surprising just how much space there is left over.

There's a choice of engines in the new model. Our test vehicle – in '2' specification – features the 1.0-litre 66bhp unit. But there's also a 1.25-litre 83bhp option and a soon-to-be-added 1.0-litre turbocharged option. As fun as the latter sounds, even the lowest output unit hauls the city car along at a perfectly adequate rate (despite a lot of luggage) hitting 60mph in 13.8 seconds and a top speed of 100mph. What's more it'll do that while sipping fuel at a miserly 64.2mpg rate on the combined cycle.

Crossing the rich, lush green vine-covered Italian countryside near Grosseto as we attempt to find the beach, the Picanto's light steering and peppy engine impresses, as does its ability to soak up potholes you'd fear would otherwise swallow it.

As we approach the beach, the asphalt crumbles away and the Picanto skips between giant holes littering the sand-covered track to the water. After unpacking all of the kit, it's impressive just how much has been pushed into the pleasantly practical Picanto.

While drying off in the supportive front seats of the Kia, there's time to play with the kit. It's functional not flashy inside, and despite the smaller screen for the multimedia system on this mid-range '2', it still works well with your phone, streaming Spotify perfectly.

There's air conditioning, electric front and rear windows, heated door mirrors and leather trimmed steering wheel to enjoy and that's on top of the options standard across the range which include remote central locking, USB and AUX ports, electronic stability control and automatic city braking.

The latter was well demonstrated on our return trip, triggering when a sheep strayed into the middle of the road. The system automatically brakes for drivers up to speeds of 50mph to a complete stop when it sensing a crash – in this case assisting to the point where the sheep narrowly avoids becoming another statistic.

Kia has certainly moved its Picanto on leaps and bounds from its predecessor. On the road it's sharper to drive, quieter and sportier than ever before. Its new tech – which on higher spec models even includes Apple CarPlay and Android Auto – is impressive, while it's a comfortable car to spend time in. What's more, it's always satisfying to know that even though it's a car unlikely to shed that blue rinse stereotype, if you are a more adventurous owner it can cope admirably with all the kit you'll need to escape city life.

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The current range of Ford Fiestas

The best-selling car in Europe is Ford Fiesta

By James Parker

The Ford Fiesta is the best-selling car in Europe, according to Ford analysis of March 2017 industry data.

Customers purchased 47,000 Fiestas in March, a 12 per cent increase year-over-year, to overtake the Volkswagen Golf as the region's top-selling passenger car.

The Ford Fiesta has been the UK best-seller for eight years and, in a record sales month in the UK, it notched up 25,428 sales.

Almost 70 per cent of Fiesta sales in March were high-specification models, including 17 per cent in top specification Titanium series. Fiesta sales helped fuel a new car registration boom in Europe that saw a record 1.93 million sales in March – a 10.8 per cent increase year-over-year. Europe has now overtaken the U.S. to become the world's second largest region for new car registrations.

Ford sold 199,900 vehicles in Europe in March (up 14 per cent year-over-year), including 156,200 passenger vehicles (up 16 per cent year-over-year). This makes Ford the second best-selling vehicle brand in Europe with a total vehicle market share of 9.2 per cent.

The all-new Fiesta goes on sale this summer

"Fiesta was again our best-selling vehicle in March, making up 12 per cent of Ford total vehicle sales. Customers continue to be attracted by Fiesta's distinctive style, powerful but fuel-efficient engines, and class-leading fun to drive character," said Roelant de Waard, vicepresident, marketinsales and service, Ford of Europe. "March was a stand-out month for Ford in Europe, with sales increases across the board."

Of Europe's five largest markets for car sales – Germany, the U.K., France, Italy and Spain – Spain recorded the most significant growth for Fiesta with sales increasing 97 per cent year-over-year in March. In Italy, Fiesta sales increased 21 per cent and in Germany 18 per cent year-over year.

The UK – where Fiesta is the best-selling vehicle nameplate of all time – saw a sales increase of 8 per cent year-over-year, while Hungary, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Romania, Switzerland and the Netherlands also recorded significant increases in Fiesta registrations.

The all-new Ford Fiesta goes on sale in Europe this summer offering four distinctive versions, including the stylish Fiesta Titanium, the Ford Performance-inspired Fiesta ST-Line and the upscale Fiesta Vignale.

An all-new Fiesta Active crossover – the first in a new line-up of Active vehicles to be rolled out across the Ford range in years to come – and the next-generation Ford Fiesta ST, powered by an all-new 200PS, three-cylinder, 1.5-litre EcoBoost engine, will follow in early 2018.

Featuring the most sophisticated driver assistance technologies and connectivity features ever in a volume small car in Europe, all-new Fiesta debuts an enhanced Pedestrian Detection system that can help prevent collisions at night; and the first Ford Active Park Assist system that can deliver brake interventions to prevent low-speed bumps when parking hands-free.

Cutting-edge powertrains include Ford's multi-award winning 1.0-litre EcoBoost petrol engine offering up to 140PS, and a 1.5-litre TDCi diesel offering 120PS – the first high-power diesel Fiesta powertrain.

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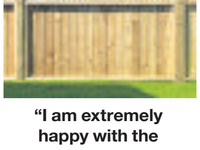

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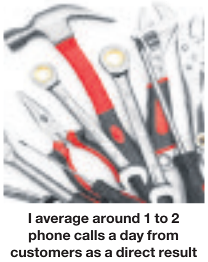

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4 Pets & Animals

equestrian corner

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guns & dogs

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1. Try to ensure you visit the puppy whilst it is still with it's Mother.
2. Do not arrange to collect a puppy from any other location than that of the breeder.
3. Ensure that you are given any KC documentation, if pedigree. Whilst Midland News Association publications take great care to avoid publication of advertisements from Puppy Farmers we cannot accept any liability should readers purchase from this kind of establishment.

5 Business & Farming

business opportunities

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business directory

accountants

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commercial premises

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Anywhere in the Midlands.
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6 Property

accommodation to let

NOTICE TO READERS
It is an offence under the Accommodation Agencies Act 1953, for an Agency to charge a fee simply for the registration of your requirements and/or supplying particulars of premises to let.

NOTICE TO READERS
Readers are advised to seek independent legal advice before entering into any financial commitments/contracts.

BEDSIT self contained room with kitchen, unfurnished, suit single working mature person, Penn Road area, References required. Non smoker. 07486 379419.

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A 1 BED FURNISHED FLAT Tettenhall area.CH. No DSS 07976 263435 / 01902 700 028.

NICE 3-BED Bloxwich, off road parking, available June 1, no DSS, £575pcm. 07447 941229.

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Lovely condition with rear back garden.
£112,000 ono.
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overseas property

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7 Jobs

building & construction

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full time - general

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drivers

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required for busy Steel Stockholder.
Must have experience in loading and transporting steel coil and sheet.
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JEAVONS COIL,
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Deepdale Lane,
Upper Gornal,
Dudley,
West Midlands DY3 2AF

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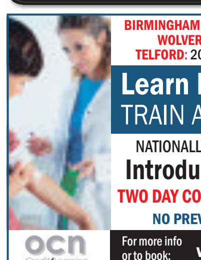

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8 Motoring

cars over £1500

BMW 520D SE
2012, new shape, grey, new engine and turbo 23,000 miles ago cost £6k with invoice, heated leather, 131k with fsh, looks and drives lovely, HPI clear, lots of extras.
£8,795
01902 471221/07517 318131

BARGAIN
CITROEN C1
11 reg.,
low insurance,
beauitful condition.
£1,595
07498 330674.

DIESEL
FORD SMAX 2.0TDCi TITANIUM
150PS, 2007, 12 months MoT, 135k, central locking, CD player, air con, abs, pas, alloy wheels, good condition.
£3,000 ono.
Telephone 07973 152480.

LOOK

HYUNDAI MATRIX 1.6GSi

5dr, silver, 04/2004 reg, 93k, roof rails, alloys, full MoT, looks and drives well,

£495.

07399 612471.

MINI COOPER S

2003/04, 11 months MoT, 108,000 only, red with white roof, petrol, EW, EDM, electric heated seats, Kenwood 7 stack stereo, just had new brakes and discs all round, drives nice.

Test drive - you will love it!.

£2,500

07946 383970

IMMACULATE

RENAULT CLIO

2006, auto, 23,000 miles, FSH, full sunroof, alloy wheels, 10 months MoT, one owner, immaculate.

£2,600.

07507 765451.

RENAULT CLIO FREEWAY

2008, 47,000 miles, abs, fsh, long MoT, central locking, pas, alloys, CD, 1149cc.

£1,799.

07879 403302.

MUST BE SEEN

SKODA FABIA 1.6 TDi

5dr, silver, 2011, immaculate condition, very economical, low mileage 49,500, long MoT, next due 14.03.18, FSH, last serviced 27.03.17, discs and pads changed at last service, well maintained, has history of being serviced by Skoda technicians, cam belt changed at 33,000 miles (have invoices), 2 keys, alarm, £20 per year road tax.

£4,500.

07817 073369.

LOOK

VAUXHALL CORSA 1.4 SXi

09 reg, 59k, MoT, very good condition, lady owner,

£2,400 ono.

07572 367349.

LOOK

VW GOLF

1996, 115,000 Miles, Green, long MoT

£750.00

01562 829474.

cars under £1500

BMW 318i

04 plate,

red, 97K,

manual, petrol,

MoT October 2017,

good condition.

£1,150 ono

07931 809992.

MUST BE SEEN

CHRYSLER SEBRING 2.4

57 plate, MoT,

Electric windows and seats

CD player, Air con.

£700 ono.

07969 193128.

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CITROEN PICASSO

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£595.

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LOOK

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£600.

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EXCELLENT CONDITION

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£799 ono.

07971 034838.

FORD KA

2008, 08 Reg, 73,000 miles, MoT March 2018, service history, metallic lilac, stereo, power steering, cat D in 2009, clean, drives well, open to offers

£795 ono

07946 835467

FORD KA STYLE

07 reg, full MoT, service history, new tyres, electric windows, pas, 1 owner, lovely car,

£695.

07791 113080.

FOR A QUICK SALE

FORD MONDEO 2.0D

53 plate, MoT Jan 2018, all electric, metallic, pas, a/c, climate control, CD player, good condition.

£550 ono.

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MERCEDES CLK320 AUTO SPORT COUPE

1998,

good condition,

leather trim,

MoT, drives nicely.

£1,200

07462 766144.

FOR A QUICK SALE

MINI ONE

03 reg, full MoT, FSH,

1 owner,

excellent condition,

black

£875

07848 820177.

BARGAIN

NISSAN MICRA 1.0

02 plate,

good runner,

low mileage,

low insurance,

MoT till September 2017,

average condition for age.

£450 ono

07968 312921.

NISSAN PRIMERA 2.2 DCi TD DIESEL

2003,

long MoT,

good, reliable runner,

6 speed box,

reversing camera etc,

PAS, CD, Sat Nav etc.

£525 ono

07486 635378.

PEUGEOT 107 URBAN

2011, 16,517 miles, black, abs, electric windows, air bag, 12 months MoT, metallic paint, central locking, one owner, pas, £20 tax, stereo, CD.

£3,300 ono.

07708 689931.

TOYOTA AYGO

5-dr Sport, 55 reg,

Family owned from new,

genuine low miles,

MoT March 2018,

new Clutch, new tyres,

paintwork needs attention

Hence £1,350.

07913 047367. Codsall.

VAUXHALL CORSA

2006, 54,000 miles, 1.2 SXI+, black, abs, electric windows, air bag, long MoT, metallic paint, central locking, pas, alloys.

£1,450 ono.

07568 519486.

1ST TO SEE WILL BUY

VAUXHALL CORSA SXI 1.2

3 door, 52 reg.

Silver.

Only 65k.

12 months MoT.

Stunning condition.

Only £795.

Telephone 07840 175237.

VOLKSWAGEN POLO

2003(53), 1.2 Twist, 70,170 miles, 5 door, silver, electric windows, air bag, air con, fsh, MoT, one owner, pas.

£1,150.

07549 225699.

GOOD RUNNER

VW BEETLE

Black 1600cc, Y reg, petrol, 5 months MoT,

£600 ono.

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MUST BE SEEN

VW GOLF 1.6 MK4

S Reg,

collectable,

10 months MoT.

£350 o.n.o.

07521 411373

DIESEL

VW PASSAT ESTATE DIESEL 1.9 TDi AUTO.

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82k miles, reliable.

£1,600.

0121 532 9827.

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Swb, diesel Van, 2008. 157,446 miles, 12 months MoT, excellent condition,

£4,400,

07940 211095.

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Lessons Starting FROM
5 Lessons £50
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Manual & Automatic
Free Unlimited Theory
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as new,

£5,750.

07710 700187.

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Suzuki SV650S Sport. New chain and sprockets. Two new tyres. Dalmec exhaust. 9,700 miles. Excellent runner.

£2,500 ono.

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WANTED Honda CB Four upto 750cc or Kawasaki KH500 for restoration.
07847 917651.

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TOP PRICES PAID FOR ALL SCRAP CARS, VANS, BIKES, CLASSICS
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1000's of parts available at all times
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Scrap & MOT Failures Best Prices Paid ELV Registered Spares Always Available
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vehicles wanted

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spares & accessories

clutches / brakes / gearboxes

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For Example:
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Hyundai 110, Toyota Yaris
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Ring for quotes on others!
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ALL AREAS COVERED
Call Bob
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anytime

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9 Local Information

public & legal notices

LEGAL / PUBLIC NOTICES
For convenience you may fax any advertising requirements to
Marie Hogg on 01902 713146 or email marie.hogg@expressandstar.co.uk
(remember to include a name/contact number for confirmation of receipt)

ELSIE RANDLE (Deceased)

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 any persons having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the aforementioned deceased, late of Flat 27 Broadmeadows Red Kite Drive Dudley West Midlands DY1 2GP, who died on 26/04/2017, are required to send particulars thereof in writing to the undersigned Solicitors on or before 21/07/2017, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to claims and interests of which they have had notice.

WALDRONS SOLICITORS
Capstan House The Waterfront
Merry Hill DY5 1XL T501511

LICENSING ACT 2003 NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR GRANT OF A NEW PREMISES LICENCE

Notice is hereby given that: Hotel Chocolat Retail Limited has applied to The Licensing Authority at Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council for a new premises licence at: Hotel Chocolat, Unit L35A Merry Hill Shopping Centre Brierley Hill DY5 1QX. The proposed licensed operating hours are as follows: Monday to Sunday 09.00 to 23.00; for the supply/Retail of alcohol Off the premises. Representations can be made in writing to the address below on or before the following date: 06/06/2017. Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council, Licensing Section, Unit 1 Hurst Business Park Narrow Boat Way Brierley Hill DY5 1UF Telephone: 01384 815101. The details of the application can be viewed by appointment only. It is an offence to knowingly or recklessly make a false statement in connection with an application and the maximum fine of £5,000 is liable on summary conviction for the offence.
Dated this 8th day of May 2017 T501382

10 Personals

personal

GENTLEMAN 83 YEARS YOUNG

1.75m tall, slim, strong, fit and very healthy, good company, well travelled, humerous, gentle and giving.

Would like to find a lady companion who would be whatever age, slim, smart, outgoing who wishes to partake in the better things in life and travel.

Full length photo if possible/returned.

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★★★

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Divorced, with youthful outlook and GSOH, seeks similar in Wolverhampton area for Friendship, outings and holidays.

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sports clubs

WITHYMOOR COLTS F.C.
Charter Standard Community Status Club.
All Managers minimum FA Level 1 and CRC Checked.
U13'S BOYS (Going under 14'S)
Require players, current school year 8.
Call Dave 07811 154631.
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Require players, current school year 6.
Call Ryan 07450 590212.
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Require players, current school year 11,
Call Sean 07935 464079.

general

LOOK

EXCHANGE WANTED

Two bedroom bungalow

(semi)

South Staffs Housing Association.

In Great Wyrley, for same in Tettenhall, Perton, Merryhill and surrounding areas.

01922 411069.

HARLEQUIN PANTOMIMES
January 2018
Little Red Riding Hood
at Perton Civic Centre, W-ton.
This award winning pantomime company have a limited number of vacancies for young adults (14 years plus) good quality dancers both male and female, also people with good vocal and acting skills are required.
Auditions at St Paul's Church, Pendeford, Wolverhampton, WV9 5NR Commencing at 7.30pm. Wed, May 24, 2017. Telephone 07966 686932. For further information and to register.

MORE CATEGORIES
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ClassifiedAds

Burton tops the charts as event proves real hit

Two riders battle it out on one of the corners during the AMCA British Motocross Championship

This competitor leaves a trail on his way round the circuit at Lower Drayton Farm, near Penkridge

CANNOCK rider Luke Burton extended his lead at the top of the AMCA British Motocross Championship with a clean sweep at Lower Drayton Farm.

The defending MX1 champion won all three races as the series visited the course near Penkridge, extending his lead at the top of the standings to 89 points.

Burton, who races for the Husqvarna team on a licence supplied by Cannock Motorcycle Club, was further aided by the mechanical problems which blighted Gary Gibson and Shane Carless, two of his main title rivals. That allowed his Husqvarna team-mate James Dodd to claim second place on the day, with Richard Cannings, another rider who races on a Cannock licence, back in third.

Challenge

More than 800 spectators turned out over the course to watch some of the country's best motocross riders in an event organised by Cannock MCC.

"Everything went according to plan," said club chairman Phil Bailey. "A lot of hard work went in from our members to make the event a success. In addition to the racing we also had a marquee with a live band."

After having two, dry, hard-pack circuits to open the 2017 series, the Lower Drayton surface, with its mixture of soil and high percentage wood chip, provided a whole different challenge to riders.

Yet the races ultimately delivered some very familiar results in the MX1 category, with Burton winning the first after battling past Gibson in the opening laps. Carless moved through the field to take second from Gibson, with Dodd third.

The second and third races were even more emphatic for Burton, who led from start to finish in both. But there was trouble for Carless, who saw his frame break while in fifth spot during race two. Cannings moved up to take third and then went one better with second place in race three behind his fellow Cannock rider.

Kinver Motorcycle Club's Luke Dean has slipped back to second in the MX2 standings. Dean enjoyed a strong start to the day with second place in the opening race but subsequent eighth and fourth-placed finishes in races two and three saw him lose his lead at the top of the standings to Dursley's Josh Waterman.

Teme Valley's Ray Rowson took victory in the opening two races and looked on course for the hat-trick before Waterman, the defending champion, reeled him in over the closing laps of the final contest.

Kinver's Lewis King is third in the overall standings after a consistent day which saw him follow up fifth in the day's opening race with second and third. Warley MCC's Jason Kendrick endured a miserable day in the 2T series, scoring just 68 points to fall from first to fifth in the overall standings.

Dursley's Brad Turner was the man to take advantage, reclaiming top spot thanks to a hat-trick of wins. Cannock's Jordan Saunders was seventh overall on the day.

The trio of James Russell, Simon Lane and Terry House again dominated proceedings in the Vets, with Russell now enjoying a 22-point advantage at the top of the AMCA Championship standings.

Russell resisted pressure from his two main rivals to claim a hat-trick of victories on the day, passing Lane late on in both races two and three. Kinver's Richard Chinn was fifth overall on the day. The farm will next host a Cannock MCC meeting on Sunday, with international events planned for June and July.

SPORTING FEATURE

By Matt Maher

Poundland in Epsom hill sponsorship deal

BUDGET retailer Poundland has announced it will sponsor a section of the Epsom Derby for the next 10 years. The Willenhall-based company has agreed a deal with racecourse bosses which will see the famous hill in the middle of the track rebranded Poundland Hill.

The popular area of the course, which is free to the public and has in years gone by attracted thousands of racegoers, will be known under that moniker at the Investec-sponsored two-day meeting, which takes place on June 2 and 3.

Phil White, who is responsible for Epsom in his role as Jockey Club London regional director, said: "We're looking to build and reinvigorate the hill and having a partner to work alongside us represents a great opportunity.

"The Derby Festival attracts such a wide range of society and that's what makes it unique. It's known as the people's race and the activities and all the people who go on to the hill is one of the reasons for that.

"The hill is unique, and having a high street retailer like Poundland associated with it can only be good for its long-term growth."

Poundland trading director Barry Williams said: "All of Britain loves the Derby. As the people's store, we're looking forward to helping make the people's hill at Epsom one of the best ways to experience the Derby at Epsom."

Golf pairs tee off for final at Belfry

TWO Penn Golf Club pairings have qualified for the national final of the American Golf Senior Championship.

Ken Smith from Sedgley and Steve Banks from Wombourne carded 45 points at the regional qualifying event at their home course and took the honours by a solitary point from fellow Penn duo Gill Meek and Jo Hall.

Both pairs will now join qualifiers from all over the UK and Ireland in front of Sky Sports' cameras at The Belfry, on September 7 and 8. They will compete over two days for the chance to be crowned American Golf Senior Champions and to be in contention for the Tournament of Champions in Mauritius.

Meek, from Kingswinford and Hall from Sedgley are the only female pairing to qualify for the finals.

"Our Championship events have proven incredibly popular over recent years," said Daniel Gathercole, director of marketing and communication at American Golf. "We can't wait to welcome all our qualifiers to the Belfry to have a great time and do battle for the title."

Firm cheques in to offer Strollers help

A MANUFACTURING company has lent its support to Dudley walking football club Hartshill Strollers.

Club member Archie Jones, a sales engineer for Waterfit, part of Thomas Dudley Ltd, handed over a cheque for £250 to club chairman, Mark Grazier.

Archie said: "As a local manufacturing company, Thomas Dudley Ltd. prides itself on being part of the community. By supporting Hartshill Strollers, the firm is showing its commitment to that goal."

Hartshill Strollers – founded nearly three years ago - play at Summerhill School, Kingswinford.

The club has grown from just four members to more than 50 – aged from 50 to 85.

Thomas Dudley Ltd is known to have been highly impressed with the Strollers' victory in the finals of the Walking Football United Over 60s National Tournament in November 2016 – the sport's equivalent of the FA Cup.

Mark Grazier said: "Hartshill Strollers is almost entirely self-financing. So we are extremely grateful for the generous donation from Thomas Dudley Ltd.

"I hope this will be the start of a continuing association between the club and the company."

Sport

Motocross rider ensures rivals gone for a Burton
Page 43

Ayres says confidence is growing

CRADLEY hero Danny Ayres wants the sweet taste of success more than ever.

Ayres has rattled up two maximums in Heathens colours in recent meetings – and he's also piled up the points in the Premiership with Leicester.

Now he wants more of the same, starting on the Isle of Wight tonight (Thursday) and at Buxton on Sunday.

Heathens are on the road before heading back to Wolverhampton on May 29 against Belle Vue in a tough Bank Holiday clash.

"It was always going to be difficult going to Cradley after the meeting at Rye House for Leicester on the last Bank Holiday," said Ayres. "The high I had was so immense, I felt physically drained and a bit ill going into that one.

"Sadly, we couldn't quite put it together for the maximum but it has really come together for me in this league in recent weeks.

"I am growing in confidence and here to take the National League over and will keep doing everything in my power to achieve that.

"You can't be too hard on yourself but if I wasn't disappointed with that then I'd give up. People tell me to be positive and I am but I am also a racer and I don't like being beaten. The day that feeling goes, that I am happy to settle for anything less, is the time to stop. I am always hungry for this.

"I have put so much into this so when it doesn't go quite right, I beat myself up. I go home, analyse things and come back stronger."

Ayres had a mixed night for Heathens in a 46-43 challenge defeat at Leicester. He won heat four despite losing his saddle but, after scoring eight from three outings, locked up during heat 13 and missed two minutes due to a mechanical fault in heat 15.

Harrier races to victory as DK host memorial 10k event

DUDLEY Kingswinford Running Club hosted their own midweek 10k road race in memory of one of their founding fathers, Dick Blackburn.

Victory went to Tipton Harrier, and former Scottish Commonwealth Games representative, Martin Williams in a time of 32.29. Club mate Amie Williams took the ladies prize in 37.33.

There were also plenty of DK runners chasing good times. First home, pulling on hosts vest for the first time in half a dozen years, was Steve Holdcroft finishing 11th in 36.29.

Dave Norman was 33rd in 39.01, Richard Bate was 43rd in 39.32 just holding off Mark Judge a place. Mark Homer was 61st in 40.39, Darren Marklew finished in 43.34, Andy Weaver in 44.35, Richard Jones in 44.45, Bob Jones in 45.52, John Andrews in 47.13, Karen Doy in 48.21, Nick Ma in 48.02, Carol Fisher in 48.57, Lucy Elwell in 49.15, Tom Porter in 49.43, Jacqui Elson-Whittaker in 50.43, Liz Hettle in 51.27, Mark Moore in 53.06, Malcolm Beddall in 52.36, Sue Payton and Lisa Kendick both came home in 53.43.

Welborn has full backing of sponsor

Welborn, right, with sponsor Dean Hiscox

JASON Welborn is good to go for more titles when he gets his next ring date after his sponsor agreed to back him as a full-time fighter.

Operations director Dean Hiscox, himself an ex-pro fighter, employs Welborn at Daneways Surfacing & Construction Contractors, of Peartree Lane, Dudley, and is his main sponsor.

They have agreed that Welborn will be exempt from work to undertake a proper training camp when the right offer for another big contest comes in. The 30-year-old, from Rowley Regis, is a wanted man again after becoming WBC International champion up at middleweight, with the scalp of Marcus Morrison.

It was a night to remember for Welborn, who also has been a two-weight area titlist with a reign at super welter and won a Midlands welter belt outright.

He has twice challenged for British honours and a WBC International crown, outpointed for the latter by three-time world title challenger Matthew Macklin. They have now joined forces, with Welborn signing up to Macklin's MTK Birmingham stable and the two are now focussed on more glory.

He's back with his old coach Shaun Cooper at the gym in Brierley Hill, too, with Lindon Scarlett and Ray 'Raza' Campbell also training him

VEGAS TARGET FOR SUPER SAM

SAM EGGINGTON said he didn't care about winning ugly after he became European welterweight champion with a knockout of Spanish fighter Ceferino Rodriguez in Birmingham on Saturday.

The 23-year-old from Stourbridge could be off to Las Vegas to fight Danny Garcia this year, if mentor Barry Hearn gets his way.

Eggington, who had previously stopped Frankie Gavin and Paulie Malignaggi, sent defending champ Rodriguez through the ropes in the 10th round after landing two left hooks.

Afterwards, Hearn said: "I want a European defence in maybe September and then Danny Garcia in Vegas with him after that.

"If not we'll fight any other welterweight world champion. But there's no rush because Sam's 23 and he's going to be around for years."

The fight swung in favour of Eggington (21-3) after he emerged stronger from a chaotic exchange in the seventh round.

Rodriguez (24-2) had previously won fights abroad in Argentina, Italy and the USA and boasted former world champion Sergio Martinez.

Eggington, who had previously stopped Frankie Gavin and Paulie Malignaggi, first made his mark as the opening round ended before body shots caused Rodriguez's legs to dip in pain.

Southpaw

Rodriguez was technically adept and remained a threat. His jab was fast, then he effectively switched to southpaw to confuse Eggington.

There was a noticeable mark underneath Eggington's right eye in the fifth, his hands dropped and Rodriguez made him pay. It was the Spaniard's best moment.

A wild brawl in the seventh round clearly suited Eggington. He shoved the champion onto the ropes, unloading every punch in his arsenal, and although Rodriguez teetered across the ring he survived the onslaught.

Each fighter landed hurtful right hands in the eighth and ninth rounds. By the 10th, Eggington's power and strength brought victory.

Kitted out after competition win

Jamie Beddall and Rowley United under-14s with Mike Williamson of Wolves at Molineux

A YOUNG football team hit the back of the net after winning a new set of kits – and met a Wolves star as part of a tour at Molineux.

Rowley United under-14s bagged a fresh blue and white Mitre strip, and training equipment, after being selected as the local winners of an English Football League competition, in conjunction with DIY trade store Wickes.

And as part of their prize, they got to meet Wolves centre-back Mike Williamson.

He said: "It means a lot to the lads – they feel the part. The experience as well, listening to their conversations they were talking about all the potential players that have come out here at Molineux and the crowd and things like that.

"It may light a bit of a fire in some of them, and push them that extra few steps. That's the best thing about football, it's a working class sport – there is no limits, anyone can play and get to any level."

The 'Kits for Kids' initiative invited junior sides to share their stories with Wickes in order to be in with a chance of winning, with 72 sets of brand new Mitre kit – in connection with each EFL club – being handed out.

United compete in the Division Two of the Stourbridge Youth League, and have consolidated following promotion last season.

Manager Dan Mandley said:"It's a fantastic looking kit so the lads are chuffed."

A hat-trick of wins for Stourbridge

WOLVERHAMPTON were beaten by Shrewsbury in the Birmingham League Cricket Premier Division, despite an innings of 62 from Worcestershire's Tom Fell and 63 from Zen Malik in a total of 252-7.

Berkswell, champions in 2016, are now the only unbeaten side in the Premier Division. They dismissed previously undefeated West Bromwich Dartmouth for 143 and won by three wickets.

Walsall lost their 100 per cent record with defeat to Ombersley. The hosts were all out for 157 at the Gorway and lost by seven wickets.

Smethwick eased an eight-wicket victory over Moseley, with Waqar Saleem (98 not out), Sunny Singh (52) and Vikram Sodhi (44 not out) surpassing their 222 target.

Himley enjoyed a six-wicket success over Leamington, for whom former England One Day International Neil Smith made 22 in a total of 146. A third wicket partnership of 88 between Chris Boroughs (48) and Nipun Karunanayake (46) set up Himley.

Fordhouses' seven wicket win at Halesowen sees them joint top of the Division Two. Halesowen remain at the foot of the table.

Former Walsall all-rounder David Powles took 5-32 and Zimbabwe's Tendai Chisoro claimed 3-20 as Halesowen collapsed to 105 all out at Seth Somers Park with Tom Williams top scoring with 29.

Harborne piled up 305-6 against Penkridge who were dismissed for 195 in reply.

Old Hill upset the formbook with a 131-run win at C&R Hawks, while Wombourne's four wicket win ended Coventry & NW's unbeaten start.

At the top of Division Three, Stourbridge have three wins from three after defeating Brewood by two wickets.

Silvers and bronzes Black Country Triathletes

BLACK Country Triathletes were among those taking part in the annual club Junior Duathlon held at Stourport cycle track.

In the Tristart category, Dylan Williams took silver in his first race, Alex Westbury took silver and Abi Hathaway bronze at TS2 and in the Youth category Lydia Silk took silver and Oliver Mason bronze. For the adults, Gary Bonner finished seventh overall and third male super vet in the Worcester Sprint Tri.

At Highley BCT took gold and silver with Ben Monkton finishing first overall and Paul Rogers, only 30 seconds behind him in second place.

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With so many different styles it can be a bit of a mine field to know what will best suit your property. At DW Windows we have a computer package which can superimpose windows in different designs and colours onto a house to give the customer a really good idea of what the finished installation would look like. When it comes to making a statement in a living room, for example, bevelled glass has the appearance of cut glass so is very decorative.

There has been something of a revival in aluminium windows which offer homeowners the very best in terms of style and performance. Aluminium flush casement windows look less plastic than UPVC and are sleek and modern in design. We also have our Residence collection which is mock wood and is so authentic it passes building regulations for properties in conservation areas.

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Whether it's windows, doors or conservatories you are thinking of having it is very important to use a reputable company - one which is FENSA registered. Does the company have a showroom which you can visit to see examples of its work? Choose one that employs its own fitters rather than subcontractors so you get a better quality job. I would also recommend checking that the firm has a good trading history and ask if it can supply testimonials.

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